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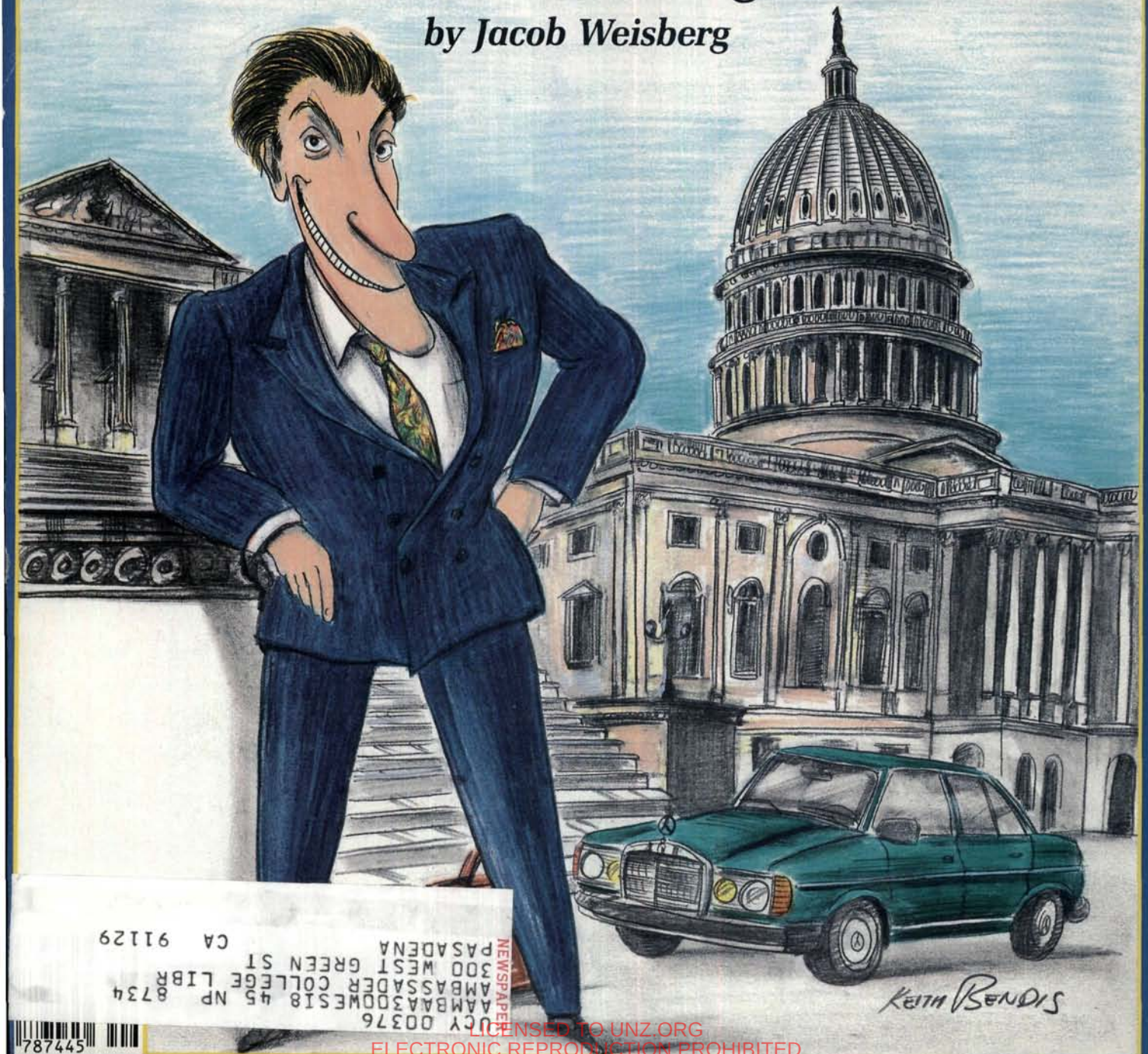
THE NEW REPUBLIC

The State-of-the-Art Washington Sleazeball

by Jacob Weisberg



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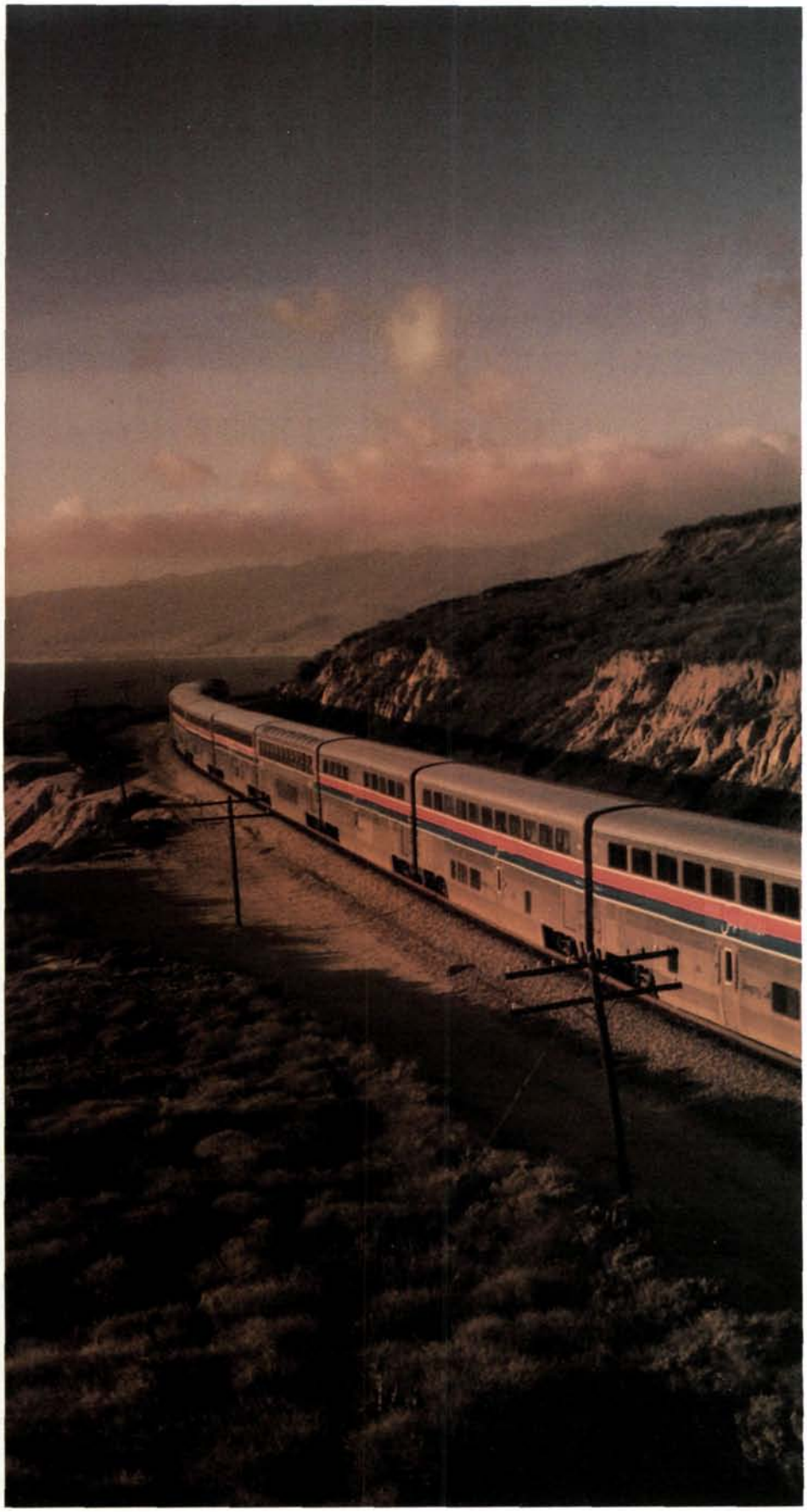

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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,699

WASHINGTON, D.C. — DECEMBER 9, 1985

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FROM WASHINGTON

SAINT RALPH

Henry James wrote the meanest description of Ralph Nader (though one not perhaps without a certain measure of accuracy, as the master himself might put it) in his 1886 novel, *The Bostonians*. James called the character Miss Birdseye.

"She always dressed in the same way: she wore a loose black jacket, with deep pockets, which were stuffed with papers. . . . She belonged to the Short-Skirts League, as a matter of course; for she belonged to any and every league that had been founded for almost any purpose whatever. [Yet she] knew less about her fellow-creatures, if possible, after fifty years of humanitary zeal, than on the day she had gone into the field to testify against the iniquity of most arrangements. . . . No one had an idea how she lived; whenever money was given her she gave it away. . . . There was a legend that an Hungarian had once possessed himself of her affections, [but] it was open to grave doubt that she could have entertained a sentiment so personal. She was in love . . . only with causes. . . ."

Thus the social reformer, skewered. I worked several years for Ralph Nader, and he's actually quite warm and funny in person. Nevertheless, his is the classic zealot's worldview, paranoid and humorless, and his vision of the ideal society—regulations for all contingencies of life, warning labels on every french fry, and a citizenry on hair-trigger alert for violations of its personal space—is not one many others would care to share with him.

But reasonable people don't move the world. On the 20th anniversary of *Unsafe at Any Speed*, his tract against dangerous automobiles, no living American is responsible for more concrete improvements in the society we actually do inhabit than Ralph Nader.

In all statistical probability, at least several dozen of you who are reading this issue of TNR would be dead today if Nader hadn't single-handedly invented the issue of auto safety. His long campaign for mandatory air bags may bore most people and enrage a few. But would even these people want cars without seat belts, padded dashboards, collapsible steering wheels, and shatter-resistant glass? On matters ranging from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to the Freedom of Information Act (just two of his monuments), Nader stands accused—sometimes justly—of going "too far." But without the people who go too far, we wouldn't go far enough.

Although Nader's personal popularity has diminished, and the causes he favors are out of fashion, his achievements are as immutable as FDR's. President Reagan may inveigh against burdensome government regulation, just as he inveighs against government spending. He may attempt changes at the margin. But he would no more get the government out of the business of protecting consumers, workers, and the environment than he would dismantle Social Security. Americans like clean air and water, safe transportation, open government, honest advertisements, uncontaminated meat. No electable politician would attempt to push back the clock by 20 years.

I wonder how many conservative businessmen, even, would care to return to the days when anyone could light up a cigarette next to you on a long airplane flight, and when an airline could overbook and bump you with no explanation or compensation. No-smoking sections and airline bumping rules—minor bits of Naderism—seemed like quixotic obsessions when first proposed. Now they are taken for granted.

Like James's Miss Birdseye, Nader knows little of ordinary human appetites. This gives him his fanatic's strength of purpose. But it also sometimes leads him astray by blinding him to the benefits that come with the risks he campaigns against. The pleasure of a hot dog means nothing to Ralph. (He calls it "America's most dangerous unguided missile.") If everyone lived like Ralph Nader, we could dispense with nuclear power and not worry about replacing the energy. In this world of sinners, though, not everyone wants to live on raw vegetables and set the thermostat at 60. Intelligent public policy requires trade-offs that the fanatic is ill-equipped and indisposed to make.

Nader's other great weakness as a reformer is that he's a prisoner of the legal mind-set. He believes in the infinite power of lawyers to achieve both bad and good. "The ultimate goal of this movement," says a recent Nader press release, "is to give all citizens more rights and remedies for resolving their grievances and for achieving a better society." But it's open to doubt, to say the least, whether the better society is one where all grievances are thought of as a matter of legal rights and remedies, to be enforced by lawyers and judges.

These days Ralph Nader is something less than a colossus bestriding American society, but still something more than another colorful Washington character. Over two decades he and his ever replenished band of disciples have operated out of a series of ratty offices, generally moving in shortly before the developers arrive to tear the place down and put up another fancy building for fancy lawyers (some of them, no doubt, getting rich off the very laws and agencies Ralph created).

He still wears those awful suits and lives in that same studio apartment. Some cynics think the asceticism is an act. And it's true that his story about wearing shoes bought at the Army PX in 1959 is wearing as thin as those shoes must be. But if a good marketing sense were a bar to canonization, there would be few saints.

At age 52, Nader may be softening a little. He sometimes shows up at those business parties that pass for social life in Washington. I even think I saw him eating a piece of cheese at one a few weeks ago. His narrow lapels, pointy shoes, and skinny ties are now the height of fashion, offering some hope that the day will come when his clothes will be out again and his politics will be back.

For 20 years Washington has been wondering, Where's the catch? Will he sell out for money, or will he run for office? Those are the normal options. But Ralph Nader is not a normal person. Operating on the mental fringe where self-abnegation blurs into self-obsession, Ralph is living proof that there isn't much difference between a fanatic and a saint. I'll bet you Mother Teresa is impossible to deal with, too.

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CORRESPONDENCE

TORT REPORT

To the editors:

In "The Tort Explosion" (November 18), TRB advocates national products liability legislation "exempting activities that meet federal standards from the risk of lawsuits." Who does TRB think writes federal safety standards? The answer, of course, is the industry that supposedly is regulated by such standards. A federal agency, whose employees often come from the industry they regulate, publishes proposed safety standards in the *Federal Register*, soliciting comments to assist the agency in adopting a final rule. Guess who reads the *Federal Register* and can afford to hire lawyers and scientists to present their case? A 1977 study commissioned by the Commerce Department concluded that a governmental standard "may well turn out to be no more than a rubber-stamped version of existing, voluntary standards adopted by manufacturers within an industry. . . . [Such a] standard is only a minimum and courts should be free to adopt a higher standard if warranted by circumstances."

Even if some federal standards do reflect the highest possible state of the art, "they become quickly obsolete," as the Commerce study found, primarily because fear of lawsuits prods manufacturers to make their products safer. To remove this incentive would sentence many people to preventable injuries and death.

HENRY COHEN
Columbia, Maryland

WHY FARMS FAIL

To the editors:

According to "Breaking Eggs" (November 11), the only reason a crisis exists in rural America is because mid-size farmers overborrowed and overproduced. Now they want the government to bail them out with our tax dollars.

The actual circumstances are far more complex and quite different. It's true many failing farms are mid-size, that is, family-size. It's also true some of them failed because they invested in land in the 1970s and lost when prices fell, real interest rates remained high, and they couldn't make their mortgage payments. But those farmers are long gone. The farmers failing now, in many instances, have never missed a payment. Yet they continue to fail because the federal government and other concentrations of power want them to. The administration wants to eliminate farm subsidies not because they want cheaper food for the urban poor, but because they want to cut government overall, reduce the budget deficit, and regain some semblance of balanced trade. Congress acquiesces because Cargill, Dow Chemical, and other corporate interests in agriculture need cheap food and overproduction, and are willing to pay handsomely for it.

These forces have deflated land values and robbed the family farmer of collateral equivalent to his debt. Once land prices fall far enough, large business interests will buy up land. Then the food prices will be determined in corporate boardrooms by people whose goal is short-term profit in an environment of little or no competition.

There is another alternative—the National Farm Policy Reform Act. It calls for a farmer referendum that, if passed, would establish a supply management program. By bringing supply in line with demand, the marketplace—not the government—would produce profit in agriculture. But the act is having a hard time in Congress. To the administration, helping farmers get organized smacks too much of labor unions, and limiting production hurts the only farm interests that Congress cares about, the ones that pay for reelection campaigns.

BRAD KNOTT
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

There is little substantive argument about the way people who have spent the bulk of their lives farming should find alternative employment. TNR contributes little to the debate by maintaining that there are neither transitional nor long-term costs involved for those who must quit farming. An equally unsatisfactory position, taken by TNR in other editorials, is to acknowledge these costs but claim they are a necessary evil to be borne by the displaced individuals for the greater good. The obvious consequence of "even-minded" people adopting this position is to further entrench those advocating protection, thereby undermining the possibility of implementing welfare-improving policies.

Farmers resist cuts in federal programs for two reasons. First, farmers as landowners would suffer significant capital losses as land values fall. Second, farmers as workers are apt to earn substantially less on the open market than what they pay themselves through farming. Why not support a position that encourages these people to get out of the business yet offers a helping hand at the same time? A program that offered federal absorption of some sizable fraction of farm debt, conditional on the sale of the farm property, would have this effect. If such assistance were made to vary inversely with the farmer's net worth and was only available for a brief period, then the timely exit of distressed farmers would be encouraged. And why not enhance their mobility by granting them general wage subsidies for alternate employment? This would aid these people in finding employment across the board and would force farm supporters to adopt a less recalcitrant position.

LANNY ARVAN
Assistant Professor of Economics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

NOBEL CAUSE

To the editors:

In its editorial criticizing the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War ("Nuclear Medicine," November 4), TNR portrays us as a partisan pressure group tilted toward Moscow. It's a fundamental misapprehension. IPPNW is a federation of physicians' organizations dedicated to detailing the medical implications of nuclear war, not some Soviet-American lobbying condominium.

Once a year representatives from 41 nations get together and issue an appeal to the heads of government of the U.S. and the USSR. It is those messages that seem to displease THE NEW REPUBLIC, apparently because the Soviet government says it supports some of IPPNW's recommendations. In every instance, those recommendations—a freeze, no-first-use declarations, a moratorium on nuclear explosions—were first put forward by Western physicians. In every instance, they were promoted by IPPNW before the Soviet government, or any government, embraced them. Should we re-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
DECEMBER 9, 1985

DUMP MARCOS

When Senator Paul Laxalt, acting as President Reagan's personal envoy, suggested to Ferdinand Marcos that he hold early elections, the answer was an unequivocal no. When George Will made the same suggestion to the Philippine president a few weeks later, on the Sunday morning program "This Week with David Brinkley," Marcos was warming up to the idea. "I am decided that with these arguments coming from the opposition, and now in this show and interview, I'm ready. I'm ready to call a snap election," Marcos told the stunned panelists.

Many viewers in this country saw Marcos's announcement as a sign that he was giving in to demands from the U.S., and edging a little bit closer to democratic rule. But members of the Philippine opposition know their wily dictator far better. The promise of an election in fact means very little. Asked to explain his plan, Marcos said during the interview that the "snap election" should take place within 60 days. This would give the opposition little time to unite behind a single candidate, raise funds, and mount an effort to keep Marcos from buying or stealing the election, as he has often done in the past.

Since the television broadcast, Marcos has made several minor concessions that appear more significant than they are. He has said he will hold the election on February 7 instead of January 17. He has said he will resign, as the Philippine Constitution requires before a special election, but will not leave office. In the next few weeks Marcos will probably accredit Namfrel, the organization of volunteer poll watchers that was responsible for the relative fairness of the 1984 parliamentary election. But he is still demanding a list of the poll watchers' names so that he can bring the organization under his control. Between now and the election, everything Marcos does will be calculated carefully to make it appear he is trying to be fair. But as Senate Intelligence Committee staff members who recently visited the Philippines put it in a rare public report, "Marcos, at this point, intends to do whatever is necessary to ensure a favorable outcome in the next election."

Nevertheless, the various opposition groups are giving the election their all, in the hope that Marcos can be pressured into meeting enough of their demands that he will lose. At the moment they are concerned with selecting a presidential candidate, who will probably be Corazon Aquino or former senator Salvador Laurel. Because of his isolation from reality, which a number of recent visitors have commented upon, Marcos may not realize how few real supporters he has left. Most of his people are fed up with a failing economy, internal repression, and growing violence fostered by the communist National People's Army (NPA). There is some hope that he will miscalculate and lose the election. But in the event that he manages to affirm his mandate, using "his considerable power to rig the elections at both the national and the local levels," as the Senate Intelligence Committee envisions, the United States will have to consider options other than that of continuing to prop up this sad, sagging tyrant.

If present trends continue, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage estimates that the NPA will reach a strategic stalemate with the Philippine army in three to five years. Senator Dave Durenberger, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, thinks two or three years would be an optimistic estimate. Whatever their potential strength, the guerrillas have emerged as a real and present danger since Benigno Aquino was assassinated in 1983. There are now estimated to be more than 15,000 armed fighters in nearly all of the 73 Philippine provinces. The NPA is not currently backed by Moscow, and it apparently prefers to remain nonaligned. But the Soviets are, to say the least, interested.

Marcos has us in a bind. Since he is the one fighting the NPA, the argument goes, we must step up military aid in order to keep them from winning. But giving Marcos more guns won't help. His army is badly organized, mismanaged, and riddled with corruption. His solution to the insurgency problem seems to be wishing it away. "They are surrendering in droves," he recently told Ted Koppel on "Nightline," insisting that he can squash the NPA within a year. His own generals have called that assessment ridiculous. In truth, there is little Marcos can do to oppose the guerrillas, since their rise is a direct result of 20 years of his repression. As long as he stays in office, while postponing military, political, and economic reforms,

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the chances of an eventual NPA victory will improve.

If the guerrillas succeed in waging a protracted civil war or in seizing power, it will be a tragedy for the 50 million citizens of the Philippines. It would also be a tragedy of sorts for the United States. Our two largest military bases outside U.S. borders—the Clark air base and the naval station at Subic Bay—are located in the Philippines. They are essential to our strategic capability in Southeast Asia. If we lost them (the leases expire in 1989, subject to renegotiation), we would be forced to monitor Soviet activity in the region from bases in Hawaii and Japan.

With the exception of Jerry Falwell, reliable friend to tyrants in trouble, even most conservatives realize where the Philippines are headed if Marcos remains in power. Although the Reagan administration waited until the eleventh hour to get worried about the situation, it has backed the International Monetary Fund's recent decision to cut off payments on loans until Marcos breaks up sugar and coconut monopolies run by his cronies, which have helped wreck the economy. Even Marcos's friends are bailing out, transferring hundreds of millions in assets to the U.S. (See "Marcos's Nest Egg," October 7.) Sources in the CIA, the Pentagon, and the State Department have all been hinting darkly that Marcos's plight is far more serious than anyone knows.

"The chances for a constitutional succession could be improved if Marcos died suddenly, as opposed to a lingering period of incapacitation," the Senate Intelligence Committee wrote in the conclusion to its recent report. Indeed, the best solution would be if Marcos would agree to die right away. But we can't count on his cooperation in this matter either. Rumors of his ill health and impending death from kidney failure have been greatly exaggerated for more than 20 years. Senator Durenberger recently proposed what would be an equally workable solution: that Marcos resign. Unfortunately, it is equally unlikely.

It's time to do more than indicate our displeasure to Marcos. Unless by some miracle he holds and wins a fair election, we should pressure him into quitting. One form of pressure, of course, is economic. If the U.S. cut off military and other aid (increased to $70 million this year), other countries and private investors would no doubt follow suit by cutting off all new loans. Without foreign investments, Marcos would lose his tenuous hold on the monopolies whose powerful leaders are still standing by him.

Senator Bill Bradley recently suggested a more novel approach to getting rid of Marcos in a *New York Times* Op-Ed article: offer him safe passage and sanctuary in the U.S. One thing keeping Marcos from relinquishing power may be his fear of punishment for his crimes. It is estimated that he and his wife have plundered one billion dollars from a country that suffers from desperate poverty. He might well be attracted to the idea of nursing his kidneys by the swimming pools of his cronies, who are already packing their bags for California. This conjures unpleasant memories about our solicitude to the fallen shah, but it's likely that Marcos's angry victims would be glad simply to be rid of him.

Indeed, it's useful to remember why the situation in the Philippines is not like Iran, or Nicaragua. The country, which was our only actual colony, still has an abiding love for the United States and a powerful democratic tradition. Many Filipinos would like to see the nation become the 51st state. By supporting Marcos, we have sorely tested this gratitude. Still, there seems to be widespread public support for an American military presence, and strong anti-Soviet sentiment. We don't want to antagonize the democratic forces by supporting an inept and corrupt tyrant past his time. We should reach out to the opposition now, and make clear to Marcos that a truly fair election is his last chance to bow out gracefully.

NOTEBOOK

□ PEOPLE DEMAND REPRESSION, REVEALS TASS-U.S. NEWS POLL: "Already, the new Soviet team has responded forcefully to the general popular feeling—*'Russkie kholtiat poriadka'*—the Russians want order. By doing so, it has produced fresh hope among the Soviet elite."

—Seweryn Bialer, *U.S. News & World Report*, November 18

□ THE QUICHE OF DEATH:

"Mr. Yurchenko made his first public appearance in the Soviet Union yesterday where he told a crowded Moscow press conference that during his two months of captivity, the CIA forced him to sunbathe and 'made me go in for sports, even play golf' in an effort to make him appear healthy after being forced to take drugs. . . .

"[A] CIA official then took him to a 'French restaurant [and] forced me to eat French food in Georgetown. . . . I was at the end of my tether—it was freedom or death,' Mr. Yurchenko said."

—*Washington Times*, November 15

□ ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA: Lon Nol, the leader of Cambodia from the ouster of Prince Sihanouk in 1970 to the arrival of Pol Pot in 1975, has died in exile in Fullerton, California. With his death, the world loses its only palindromic national leader. In this sense, at least, we will not soon see his like again.

□ PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST:

Jordan and Syria agree on peace talks with Israel

". . . A joint communique issued after two days of meetings between their premiers in Damascus said: 'The two sides affirmed their rejection of . . . direct negotiations with Israel.' "

—*Boston Globe*, November 14

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POSTCARD WEST GERMANY

CURTAINS

Munich

WHEN GERMANS TALK about Hitler, World War II, and the Holocaust, they invariably deploy the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In English, that word is usually rendered as "coming to terms with the past," though the literal translation of the verb *bewältigen* might tell a more accurate story. The dictionary lists "to conquer," "to overcome," or "to surmount" as equivalents. History, one might surmise, is not remembrance but a duel, not the "seamless web" of past and present but an ancient foe who must at last be bested.

Last May *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* scored a big one when Chancellor Helmut Kohl managed to drag Ronald Reagan to a forgotten military cemetery in Bitburg so that an American president would at last pay homage to Germany's dead of World War II—Wehrmacht soldiers, Waffen-SS, and all. This fall the conquest of history moved up another notch and to another stage. The place was Frankfurt, the stage was that of the city-financed *Schauspielhaus* (theater), and the drama was about a play left behind by the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder, titled *Trash, the City and Death*.

West Germany's playhouses, traditionally given not to entertainment but to heavily subsidized edification, rarely rate top billing in the national media. Yet this month the front page has been filled with stories about the "Rich Jew," the anonymous (archetypical?) protagonist of the Fassbinder play. And while normally Pershing bases and airport runways provide the targets of organized discontent, this time the demonstrators took over the stage of the Frankfurt *Schauspielhaus*, blocking the premiere of *Trash* with their bodies. What's more, for the first time in anybody's memory, it was young Frankfurt Jews who took "direct action." Meanwhile, the city's Greens stood outside upholding orderly procedures in the name of artistic freedom, and their allies in the leftish press bemoaned the occupation as a grievous "breach of the law."

Trash, the City and Death is an allegory, and it features a familiar cast of Fassbinder characters: whores, pimps, and homosexuals; a corrupt police commissioner, a dwarf, and a nameless lead known only as the "Rich Jew." The language is vulgar, and the action is rife with sadomasochistic ritual. But that is not what turned *Trash* into a nationwide casus belli. The issue was "subsidized anti-Semitism" (as one of the protest posters put it) in a country that gave the world Auschwitz and Treblinka.

Fassbinder always denied the charge of anti-Semitism—pointing out that fictitious phrases declaimed by fictitious characters do not an indictment make. His intent, he claimed, was "Brechtian": to use the stage as teaching tool, to make transparent what was evil about contemporary urban life in West Germany. The play's locale is "the Moon, because it is as uninhabitable as Earth and its cities in particular." The city "devours" its dwellers, those who came to seek happiness and riches. The attack against *la condition urbaine* is hardly a novel motif in German literature; what *is* new in post-Holocaust Germany is the role the "Rich Jew" plays in this brutish setting.

His job is to keep the wheels of alienation and destruction grinding. He says of himself: "I buy the old dwellings in this city, tear them down, build new ones, and sell them well. . . . I must not care whether children weep, whether the old and crippled suffer. I must not care. And the angry screams of some—I simply do not listen to them. . . . The city needs the unscrupulous businessman who acts so that it may change."

Jews, especially the tiny band of survivors (about 30,000) who have made their home in postwar Germany, have heard this tale before, and if they are too young to have read *Der Stürmer* or listened to Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the message is indelibly imprinted in their collective memory. To which Fassbinder aficionados might reply: "But it is not Jews whom Fassbinder was attacking: his *real* target was ruthless Capitalism, which turns our cities into moonscapes, which tears down old buildings . . . , etc. Isn't the 'Rich Jew' merely a cog in the mechanism, *himself* a victim of the System rather than its engineer?"

If so, Fassbinder chose a peculiar symbol indeed. Why, if the System is the culprit, not feature the "Large Bank" or the "Rich Insurance Company"? Any one of these gargantuan, anonymous institutions has done more to turn Frankfurt (the real-life locale of the play) into a "Manhattan-on-the-Main" than all of the town's Jewish builders put together. Why pick on the "Rich Jew" for "heuristic purposes" if not to strike a responsive chord in the lowermost layers of the German unconscious where this archetype has been buried by the Holocaust, but not exorcised?

The Jew as scapegoat occupies a venerable place in the anti-Semitic mind-set, but there is more to come as we listen to the "Rich Jew": "The Police Commissioner is my friend . . . , the Mayor likes to invite me over, I can count on the members of the City Council." Or as we watch Roma B., the whore, reporting on her customer's extraordinary sexual potency and proclivities. Or when we learn at the end that the Police Commissioner himself hushed up the murder of Roma B., committed—surprise, surprise—by the "Rich Jew." Allegory here turns into pure demonology, with the rapacious and omnipotent Jew providing the ultimate rationale for the anti-Semite's annihilationist fantasies. Since the Jew is endowed with demonic qualities, he is beyond reform—and the solution must perforce be a Final One.

These themes antedate the Holocaust by centuries. Yet Fassbinder has managed to dredge up a new motif that would have Uncle Sigmund clapping in morbid delight. Listen to one of the central figures in *Trash*, Hans von Gluck: "He sucks us dry, the Jew. Drinks our blood and puts us in the wrong because he is a Jew and we carry the guilt. . . . The Jew is guilty because he makes us guilty—

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because he is there. Had he stayed where he came from, or had they gassed him—I could sleep better today. They have forgotten to gas him. This is no joke, this is how it thinks in me."

This is what you might call "anti-Semitism in spite/because of Auschwitz." The Jew has not only *done* wrong; in his postwar incarnation, he is *existentially* guilty because, as long as he lives in their midst, he will remind Germans of the past that was Auschwitz and Treblinka. His presence in postwar Germany is a permanent indictment. And to exorcise the ghosts of history and handed-down guilt—the survivors too must be extirpated. "Begone or be dead so that I may rest easy" is the unspoken message Hans von Gluck has for the graduates of the death camps.

Whether Fassbinder invented von Gluck as a parody or "Brechtian" provocation was immaterial in the end. So were the whiny pleas of Gunther Rühle, the general manager of the Frankfurt *Schauspielhaus*, to treat *Trash* as a lofty contribution to Judeo-Christian understanding. Indeed, the more encounter sessions Rühle organized to soften the opposition, the angrier became Frankfurt's Jews. "Where do you get the guts," asked one Jewish woman, "to tell me, a survivor of Auschwitz, how to interpret this play?"

Nor did it help to turn *Trash* into philo-Semitic garbage on the stage—"to Aryanize" the "Rich Jew," as the critic of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* put it with dripping irony. "Where did it go, that murderous cliché right out of *Der Stürmer*: the lewd, avaricious, treacherous, revengeful, and ready-to-kill Jew?" Instead, after the 30 or so Jews occupied the stage on opening night, a select group of critics was treated to a Nordic banker type, decked out in cashmere, homburg, and weltschmerz, during a hermetically sealed "dress rehearsal."

BETWEEN the blockade of the premiere on Halloween and the rescheduled opening on November 13, published opinion in West Germany turned slowly but inexorably against *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* à la Fassbinder and Rühle—with only the leftish *Frankfurter Rundschau* condemning the "illegality" of the stage takeover by Frankfurt Jews and celebrating *Trash* as "some of the best the current German theater has to offer." On the eve of the second try, bemoaning the "irrationality" of the debate, Mr. Rühle removed *Trash* from this season's repertoire.

Perhaps it is a whiff of normality when young Jews in postwar Germany try their hands at "direct action" just as their Christian contemporaries have done since the 1960s. On the other hand, it may be no fluke that *Trash*, which languished in the archives for a decade, followed hard on the heels of Bitburg. There the president of the country that brought the Germans Nuremberg was to proffer not just reconciliation but absolution. In *Trash*, the conquest of history goes one better: redemption is not so much solicited as taken, and guilt not accepted but dispatched—by projecting it onto the victims-as-perpetrators.

Trash was finally canceled—to the relief of those Germans, representing a solid consensus, who do not believe that their country's history is like a supermarket where you can proudly cart out the Goethes and the Beethovens and leave the Hitlers and Himmlers behind. But the urge to escape continues—and we have Fassbinder's Frau Müller (chained to the wheelchair, a symbol of postwar Germany?) to make that point toward the end of *Trash*: "Still, I won't lose faith; I will fight for our happiness. We won't let ourselves be crushed by terms which are not ours, which others laid down so that we may suffer them."

JOSEF JOFFE

Josef Joffe is foreign editor and columnist of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Munich.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

JUDGING JUDGES

THERE ARE two things you need to know about Alex Kozinski. One is that the case against his nomination as a federal appeals judge was weak. Kozinski, 35, an emigrant from Rumania who topped his class at UCLA Law School, was accused by several Senate Democrats of lacking judicial temperament. How so? Some of his underlings when he was special counsel at the Merit Systems Protection Board in 1981 and 1982 had found him overbearing. He was accused of puffing up his record at the board when he testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Also, he sent several friends a copy of a radio editorial that linked a group opposing his nomination to the left-wing Institute for Policy Studies and, by extension, to terrorists; the group claimed to have severed its connection with IPS. Oh, yes, the second thing you need to know about Kozinski is that he was confirmed November 7 only by the skin of his teeth; 43 senators voted against him.

When a nominee draws this many negative votes, something is up. The Kozinski fight foreshadows a long and bitter struggle over judges between the Reagan administration and Senate Democrats. Joseph Biden, the senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, says the 43 nay votes signify a "rebellion" against Reagan's judicial appointees. "This was more than a vote on one man," adds Senator Paul Simon of Illinois, who's been assigned by Biden to conduct the initial Democratic screening of judicial appointees. "It was a message that we're concerned about the way things are going."

Biden, Simon, and other Democrats insist the administration, led by Attorney General Edwin Meese III, is trying to stack the federal judiciary with conservative ideologues who are young and thus eligible to remain as judges for decades. This is antidemocratic, argues Biden. "They're trying to put in place young, committed, ideologically

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pure crusaders who will assure that the revolution goes on after Reagan leaves, even if the nation decides we want to change course." Simon says his chief objection is that many of Reagan's nominees are minimally qualified. But their conservatism bothers him too. "It's not a healthy thing for our system of justice to have swings," he says. "If we have too much of a tilt to the right, when Democrats get in we'll have too much of a tilt to the left."

BY COMMON practice, judges are not overtly opposed on ideological grounds. Instead, senators cite flaws, small or large, in the nominee's record or allege a lack of judicial temperament as the reason for their opposition. Now Democrats have all but abandoned this fig leaf. "If Reagan sent up a Nazi, a confirmed racist, or a Communist Party member, nobody would say we couldn't oppose that person on ideological grounds, regardless of his intellectual ability," says Biden. Likewise, when he sends up an arch-conservative. "Anyone at the ideological extreme" lacks objectivity and therefore the proper judicial attitude. Two men Biden would oppose for judgeships on ideology alone are William Baxter, the former antitrust chief at Justice, and Meese himself. Simon has more qualms about invoking an ideological standard, especially since he urged conservative Republicans not to use one in 1979 when Representative Abner Mikva, a liberal Democrat from Illinois, was nominated for a judgeship. Still, he says, there are times.

If Justice Department officials are indeed attempting to pack the federal courts with judges who pass an ideological litmus test—abortion, criminal rights, etc.—this plainly entitles Democrats to vote against them solely on ideology. But that isn't the case, the officials protest. What they want are judges who share their judicial philosophy. The distinction here between ideology and philosophy is an exceedingly fine one, and it escapes Simon altogether. "I'm not sure what the difference is," he says. Justice officials explain it this way. If a judge thinks abortion should be legalized, that's ideology. If a judge believes the courts should do the legalizing, that's judicial philosophy. And by the Reagan yardstick, it's the wrong philosophy.

Got the distinction now? As a last resort, Grover Rees, the Justice Department's special counsel for judicial selection, offers a simplification. "Hugo Black, Frankfurter, Holmes, both Harlans would be perfectly acceptable under President Reagan's view. William O. Douglas wouldn't be." In searching for judges, says Rees, "we're looking for the smartest and most sophisticated lawyers we can find who agree with the judicial philosophy that President Reagan promised judges would have," he says. "Simply stated, the president wants to appoint judges who believe the Constitution and the laws really mean something, and that meaning constrains them, just as it constrains the other branches of government." According to Rees, there are "lots of decent people who believe the Constitution has broad language that judges should hang their hats on when making rules for modern living. Many of these are thoughtful and intelligent people, but President Reagan promised not to appoint them as judges."

Rees does not pretend this is business as usual for a Republican administration. Ordinarily, Republicans do not make judicial philosophy an overriding concern in picking judges. Instead, GOP administrations have named bar association presidents and prominent local attorneys to judgeships, regardless of their judicial views. As a result, a lot of what Rees and other Reaganites call "non-constructionists" have slipped into the judiciary. Perhaps not surprisingly, Simon professes admiration for the judges picked during Gerald Ford's presidency.

Biden's nightmare is that Reagan will fill more than half the 743 judgeships with young, doctrinaire conservatives. But appointing so many judges is hardly unprecedented. In two terms, President Eisenhower named 61 percent of the federal judiciary and Wilson 50 percent. In less than two, Johnson picked 54 percent, Nixon 45 percent. In one term, Carter appointed 39 percent (compared to 29 percent for Reagan in his first term). Nor are Reagan's nominees disproportionately young. The average age is just under 50 for Reagan's judges, just over 50 for Carter's. And this hasn't changed since Meese took over at Justice, asserts Richard Willard, the chief of the civil division.

Nor, finally, are Reagan's judges decidedly more conservative than Carter's were liberal. Carter encouraged the creation of independent judicial selection commissions, but these often recommended nominees affiliated with liberal causes. Alan Simpson of Wyoming, the deputy Senate majority leader, says the only flap he remembers was over a Carter appointee whose judicial views were conservative. He suggests that liberal Democrats may merely be carrying out a vendetta against Meese, whom they failed to block as attorney general. Simpson, by the way, was one of the Republican senators who rebuffed Meese's request that they send up five suggested district court nominees, not one.

THERE IS a flaw—a big one—in the way the Reaganites view Senate confirmation of judges. While arguing against an ideological veto of judges by liberal Democrats, the administration allows conservative Republicans to exercise one. One potential appointee was killed by Judiciary Committee conservatives because he had given a small donation to a pro-abortion group. A nominee for another, CIA general counsel Stanley Sporkin, is being blocked by a single GOP senator, Jeremiah Denton of Alabama. Moreover, Senate Democrats have a legitimate gripe that the current crop of nominees includes an alarming number who are rated minimally qualified (the third of four rankings, the fourth being unqualified) by the American Bar Association. Of the last ten appointees sent to the Senate, six fell into the category of being rated qualified by a majority of the ABA screening panel, but unqualified by a minority.

How will the struggle go? Watch two possible judges in particular. One is Michael Horowitz, the general counsel of the Office of Management and Budget. The civil rights community is out to get him, since he opposes racial quotas of all sorts and would dismantle affirmative action

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programs. But Horowitz, a civil rights activist himself in the 1960s, is highly qualified for the U.S. Court of Appeals, to which he has been nominated. If Senate Democrats block him, it will be a triumph of ideology. The other case involves Lino Graglia, a University of Texas law professor and something of a conservative eccentric. Twice now the Justice Department has sent his name to the ABA. Twice the ABA has voted eight to four that Graglia is unqualified for the federal appeals bench. If the Reagan crowd goes ahead and nominates him anywhere, that, too, will be a victory for ideology.

FRED BARNES

Eulogy for Indiana's old-time pol.

SETH DENBO, R.I.P.

THERE ARE REPORTS from Indiana that Governor Robert Orr has established an enemies list of sorts. Orr will punish and reward GOP county chairmen depending on whether they have paid their "assessments" to the state party. The assessments are the semi-mandatory financial obligations that chairmen meet by collecting semi-voluntary assessments from people who owe their jobs to the Republican Party (two percent of net is suggested). "Land of Assessments" should be stamped on Indiana's license plates.

Seth Denbo made it out of town just in time, because paid up or not, Denbo would have been on Orr's enemies list. The special treatment he got from the governor usually came when Orr was trying to remove him from his job.

Until Denbo shuffled off this mortal coil on a wintry night last February, swerving to avoid a dog on an icy back road, he was a living artifact of American history. At age 74, Denbo was a county chairman from the land and time when courthouses were still supreme. "Ol' Denbo," as he called himself, was a lapel-thumping sport-jacket Republican (size about 46 squat) who hoed the back rows of Indiana politics for more than a quarter of a century. His political ethic was simple: better you should owe me a favor than I owe you one. That is protection against enemies, and Denbo had a knack for making enemies. Jobs were his passion, and his particular lair was the highway garage in each county, rich in patronage, assessments, and gossip.

And Crawford was his county—Crawford, whose bad civic habits earned it the reputation of being a miniature Kansas City, Chicago, or Newark. Telling his stories, Denbo would lean in, lower his voice as if closing a deal, "The Friday and Saturday before an election, there's so many people in the courthouse you couldn't stir 'em with a stick! They were catching 'em coming in and out of the auditor's office. Someone was paying them off in the *vault* of the auditor's office, I guess!" *Thunnk!* Knuckle to the chest.

Those were the Democrats Denbo was describing, but he never claimed to be a personally enrolled saint himself. "We haven't always been the best in the world," he would say. "We had a senator here who maybe was supposed to have lost, but our side took care of things a few years ago." Taking care of things in Crawford County, a grand jury once found, included vote buying, forgeries, and interference with voting, with the mails, and with absentee ballots. That was 1962, and those who pleaded guilty were fined five dollars plus costs, a total of $25. Understandably, the bad habits of Crawford County never were entirely stamped out.

It is not hard to see how Governor Orr and Denbo might not get along. Orr is blue suit, white hair, proper Republican, a two-term governor, easy-going and genial, but committed to making the Hoosier GOP a modern political party. Seth Denbo single-handedly kept Indiana politics premodern.

WHEN it comes to political technology, fund-raising, polling, computers, and suchlike, Orr and his fellow Republicans are state of the art. Reapportionment is always Old Testament politics, so the Indiana Republicans laid out nearly a quarter of a million dollars to hire computers programmed to draw the worst possible districts for Democrats. The gerrymander worked so well that the Democrats sued, saying the malicious intent could be found by merely looking inside the computers. The case is now before the Supreme Court. Last year, in an effort to win the youth vote, Governor Orr once again dared to be modern, starring in the county's first campaign rock video, thereby earning the nickname "Boppin' Bobby." In the video, Orr was flanked by clean-cut Hoosier college students, but for outreach, the premiere was held at a downtown Indianapolis disco, not normally a hangout for the nation's oldest governor.

Denbo got a chuckle out of Orr's rock video. In truth, the politics of southern Indiana is still close combat, played more by Denbo's rules than by Orr's. Both parties carry get-out-the-vote activities beyond conventional limits. Denbo told of tending his special flock of absentee voters, folks who had moved from Crawford County years before, but for reasons best known to themselves and Seth, they kept voting there—and voting the way Denbo asked them to. Democrats had their own show, a county clerk who steamed open entire mailbags of absentee ballots in her kitchen, making changes as needed, then resealing the envelopes with egg whites.

The county clerk was a key figure in Denbo's political science: "A friend once told me, 'Seth, you give me the county clerk and the prosecuting attorney's office to start with, and I'll return you the rest.' And I told him, 'Yeah! You got them two and you can steal the rest.' " *Thunnk!*

Incontestably, Denbo embodied older ways of doing things, but that too could be handy. In the 1960 Kennedy-

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Nixon race, the Republicans needed an experienced eye to monitor Lake County, a Democratic bastion with its own reputation for corrupt election politics. "They figured Ol' Denbo would know what to look for," he allowed. What stood out in Denbo's memories of that day were carloads of voters transported from one polling place to the next, each getting a new name and a fresh ballot at every stop. That went beyond Denbo's own rich experience.

The gallery of politicians Denbo kept in his study included autographed photos of Democratic governors. The chairman said he often had more trouble getting along with his own party than he did with the Democrats. One Democrat Denbo would have enjoyed is Winfield C. Moses Jr., the popular mayor of Ft. Wayne. Thought to be a prospective candidate for governor, Moses recently pleaded guilty to three criminal counts of covering up $7,100 in *Democratic* campaign funds that he contributed in the Republican primary, to beat a candidate who reportedly had his eye on Moses's chair in city hall. In a plea-bargaining deal with the special prosecutor, Moses was required to resign as mayor, but he avoided four years in jail and fines up to $10,000. The Democratic committeemen of Ft. Wayne had ten days to choose someone to complete Mayor Moses's term. Denbo, who beat a few raps himself, would have loved the deal they came up with. The committeemen chose Moses.

Denbo's rule was never to give up a political job without a fight. He won his Crawford County chairmanship in 1958 at gunpoint. He was opposed by both the governor and the U.S. senator, and Seth's side actually fired shots, but only into the floor and ceiling of the local bank building. He also believed in making an impression on his enemies. When a local sheriff showed around a foggy salacious photograph of a woman and a man who looked vaguely like Denbo, the chairman took him to court, beat him, and made the sheriff serve 15 weekends in his own jail.

DENBO also served as Eighth District Republican chairman for 24 years, a job that meant more influence, more jobs, more assessments, and more brushups with Governor Orr, who began as a county chairman in that district, serving under Denbo. After the 1984 election, Orr firmly decided that modernization required the replacement of Seth Denbo.

Denbo was to be knocked out at a state committee meeting. One politician in on the conspiracy, now a Denbo eulogist, says, "We sat in the governor's residence until 1 a.m. calling county chairmen in the Eighth District. When we had a safe majority against him, we went to bed. Seth did not. He drove the district all night long. When they called the roll at state committee the next day, he beat us."

Governor Orr learned too late not to underestimate the canny old Denbo's tie-ups among county level Republicans, and he knew respect was owed. When Denbo died, the governor traveled to Crawford County for the funeral. Orr smiles, "I wanted to be sure there was nothing still moving in that coffin."

The statute of limitations has run out on Seth Denbo, and now Indiana can move into the modern era. The erring boy had no regrets.

KEN BODE

Ken Bode is national political correspondent for NBC News.

The insurance crisis hits preschool.

GOOD-BYE DAY CARE

DAY CARE HAS become dangerous. Not for the kids. Contrary to what you might gather from the headlines, child abuse is very rare at day-care centers. The danger is to the people running the centers: they are being driven out of business because they are unable to get liability insurance. After a year of heavy losses throughout the insurance industry and of lurid stories about child molesting in preschools, companies are drastically raising their rates, excluding coverage for physical and sexual abuse, abruptly canceling or not renewing premiums, and getting out of the area altogether.

Triny McClintock, who runs the nonprofit Rockland After School Programs in Rockland County, New York, learned this summer that her liability premium was being increased by close to 1,000 percent, from nine dollars to $85 per child. At the same time, the insurance company began to specifically exclude coverage for sexual and physical abuse; she was told that to obtain it would cost as much as $10,000 a year. McClintock has never filed a claim of any kind. "The parents can probably afford the increase," she says, "but I can't afford to run the program without coverage for abuse. One suit could endanger my personal holdings." She has called numerous insurance agents in search of other policies, but with no success. Her own agent advised her to close the center. If by December she doesn't find the policy she's looking for, she will do just that.

The insurance industry's flight from day care is based more on vague alarm than on firm actuarial data. Although day-care policies have turned out to cost more to administer than insurers expected, there seems to be little evidence that they have proved particularly risky. James Strickland of Child Inc. in Austin did a computer search of articles in insurance journals from the past five years, which failed to turn up a single one citing child care either as "high risk" or "high loss." Strickland's own survey found that liability claims from child care and preschools were rare, and that when they did occur, the settlements weren't particularly large. Numerous insurance agents and brokers readily agree with him. What's more, although in the last year several insurance companies have

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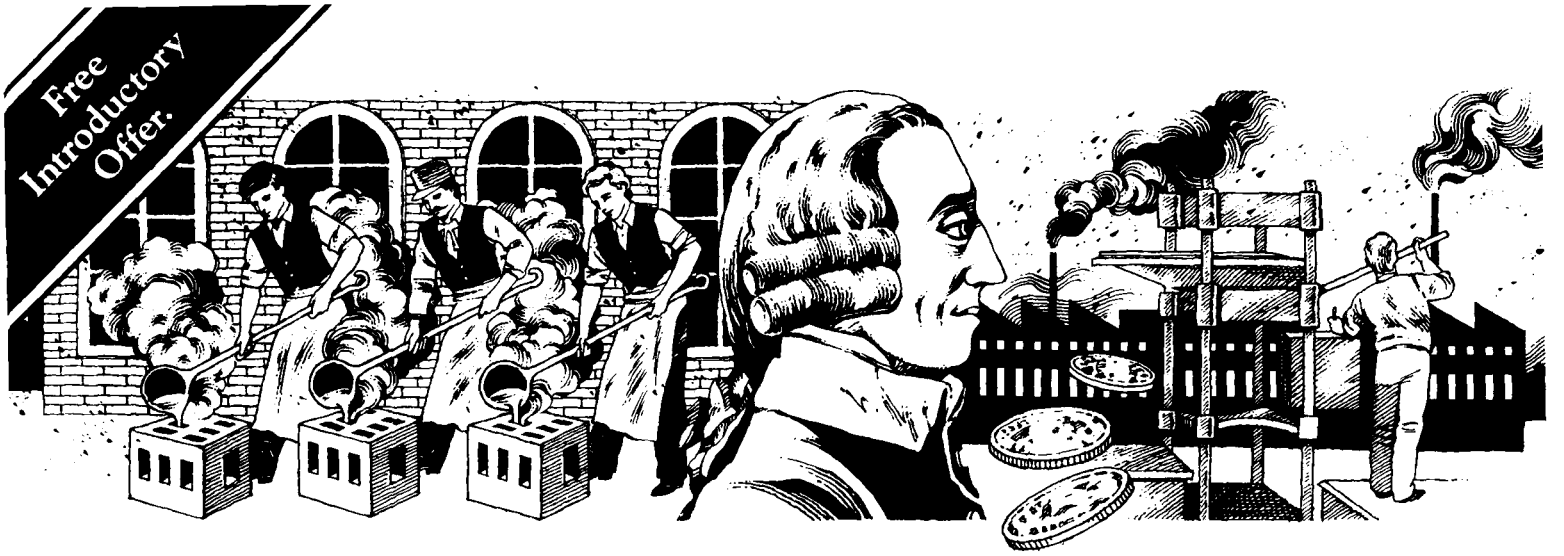

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settled claims for abuse, so far no jury has made an award for a case of physical or sexual abuse at a day-care center. The notorious McMartin Preschool case in Manhattan Beach, California, hasn't yet gone to trial.

The truth is that children are far more likely to be abused or neglected by someone in their own family than they are by their day-care teachers. The American Humane Association estimates that parents or other relatives account for 97 percent of the reported sexual abuse cases in this country; day-care employees account for barely one percent. And as Thomas L. Birch of the National Child Abuse Coalition testified this summer in congressional hearings on the child-care insurance crisis, far from fostering abuse, day care often helps to prevent it.

Nevertheless, the fears of the insurance industry aren't groundless. Insurers can't reasonably rely on past experience as a measure of potential future obligation. At a time when damage awards are rising in every area from neighborhood bars to entire municipalities, it's not surprising that insurance companies are wary about uncharted territory. Clever lawyers have stretched the definition of harm beyond recognition, and sympathetic juries are increasingly willing to assign responsibility for what once would have been construed as unfortunate accidents. Huge sums beyond all measure of actual loss are being routinely shelled out for "emotional distress" and for "punitive damages."

"If you're an insurer," says Peter Huber, a Washington lawyer, "there's no reason to suppose that the awards won't continue to go up. There is no built-in stopping point." Insurers, uncertain where the trial lawyers will strike next, are especially unnerved by all the publicity about child abuse. A few sensational cases such as McMartin's, with potentially large settlements for numerous plaintiffs, were enough to poison the prospects for every day-care center in the country.

When one is working with children, injuries of various kinds are not uncommon, and in day care the limits of liability have only begun to be tested. If a child throws a toy truck at his friend, causing a wound that will leave a scar, a mother might well sue the center for negligent supervision. Of course, if it had happened at home, under her watch, there would be no solace in the courts, and no one to punish except herself. Was the day-care center at fault? Hard to say, and expensive to determine. If the center is found negligent, another concerned mother, hearing about the suit on the local news, is more likely to consider filing charges when her daughter falls off her preschool's jungle gym. And no one has yet come up with satisfactory definitions for physical and sexual abuse. Rattled day-care employees now hesitate even to hug a child--for good reason. The St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, like many others, has devised what it calls a "no touch exclusion" for its day-care centers, which rules out coverage for physical and sexual abuse. Hence McClintock's inability to obtain the policy she needs, and her alarm.

BUT THE TORT system isn't the only force at work here. The insurance industry counts primarily on its investments—not its premiums—to keep itself afloat. In the early 1980s, when interest rates were high, companies entered an intensive price war and were temporarily able to maintain comfortable profits even after slashing the costs of their policies. When rates plummeted at the same time that liability awards rose, insurers suffered unexpected setbacks. Last year, according to industry figures, property and casualty insurers withstood losses of $1.5 billion. Panic set in, and insurers greatly expanded the list of businesses they deemed "high risk." Robert Hunter, president of the National Insurance Consumer Organization, points out, "When the South Bronx started to burn down, insurers pulled out of the North Bronx too. Day care is the North Bronx."

Some of that panic may have been feigned. Natwar Gandhi of the General Accounting Office notes that even though 1984 was the industry's worst year ever, it still had a net cash flow (thanks to a large cushion of reserves) of $11.7 billion *after* paying all claims and expenses. The insurance industry is not federally regulated, receives several special tax breaks, and enjoys immunity from the antitrust laws. Hunter and other consumer advocates charge that in fact the insurance companies are acting in concert to create a liability crisis in order to force a reckoning with the tort system.

WHATEVER THE CAUSE, the result is that insurance and litigation—social institutions intended to produce economic stability and social justice—are producing instability and chaos instead. In day care the ironies are particularly apparent. A crucial industry is discouraged from expanding, or even continuing, at a time of unprecedented demand. As a consequence, the risks that so worry insurers and parents—those that result from inadequate supervision of children—are made more likely. Thanks to exaggerated concerns about virtually nonexistent liabilities, many of the real liabilities of day care—high cost; insufficient supply; and widely inconsistent standards of care, licensing procedures, and regulation from state to state—are probably going to get worse.

Radical increases in insurance costs leave day-care directors with three unpleasant choices: they can scrimp on staff and curtail their services; they can continue without insurance; or they can pass on the increase to the parents. Lower salaries (most day-care workers already make subminimum wages) and fewer, less qualified staff mean more accidents, and more claims. Operating without insurance is not only foolhardy but illegal in many states. And paying for day care is already a struggle for many parents. The YMCA of Orange County, California, which runs 34 day-care centers, says that one of its two liability insurance policies recently rose from $2,700 a year to $83,000; their customers are being asked to assume the increase. A number of parents have already dropped out, and they expect to lose others. Without affordable day care, many parents face the prospect of either quitting their jobs or adding their kids to the growing ranks of

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"latchkey children." Needless to say, an unsupervised child at home is at much greater risk of being hurt or "neglected" than a child at the local Y.

The state of family day care is particularly precarious. Of the 20 million children in child care in this country, two-thirds of them are in family day care, the least expensive and most convenient option for most parents. A woman who watches three children during the day might not be able to afford an $800 insurance premium. Even if she can, it could be virtually impossible to obtain. In Baltimore County, 241 family homes had their insurance canceled this summer by a financially distressed company. Maryland's insurance commissioner, Edward Muhl, required the company to continue the policies until they expire at the beginning of the year. So far no replacement has been found. Most family day-care businesses (an estimated five million to six million) already operate illegally, unlicensed and unregulated. Expensive and scarce insurance will drive more homes "underground," and put others out of business.

What can be done to convince companies to insure day care? One sensible approach would please the insurance industry, but would be fought bitterly by the trial lawyers. Flat limits could be placed on liability, as has been done, for example, in nuclear power, worker's compensation, and—in some states—medical malpractice. And the statute of limitations could be shortened: a claim can currently be filed up until the child reaches adulthood. Peter Huber points out that "you can restore insurability to anything by making the damages predictable and finite."

Meanwhile, Governor Thomas Kean of New Jersey has issued an emergency regulation forbidding insurers in the state from sudden cancellations. Maryland and California are attempting a "Marketing Assistance Program," under which insurance companies agree to spread the risk by creating a group of insurers to which people in day care can apply for liability coverage. If the voluntary MAP doesn't work, there's always the "Joint Underwriting Association," under which insurers are *required* to cover certain risks if they wish to do business in the state at all. (It was the threat of a bill for a JUA in the California state legislature that prompted insurers to address the problem themselves.) And a group of day-care associations, headed by the Child Care Action Campaign in New York, is working out an agreement with one company to insure all day-care centers and family homes that meet its own accreditation standards. None of these efforts guarantees that insurance will be universally affordable, but they do at least make it available. In the long run, many believe, these patchy efforts will have to be replaced by old-fashioned, unpopular, federal regulations.

More than half of all mothers with children under age six have jobs, and the number is increasing. Whatever its problems, day care is indispensable—not only to parents, but to the industries, professions, schools, and government agencies that employ them. Lawyers and actuaries may be specialists in the business of managing unforeseen risk, but they have proved to be clumsy social engineers. It shouldn't be left to them to decide whether kids can go to day care.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

Protecting allies is one thing. Following their advice is another.

THE MULTILATERAL FALLACY

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

FOR THE United States, many humiliations attended the TWA hijacking to Beirut last summer. Most were unavoidable. During the event, the U.S. was helpless principally because it did not want to risk the lives of the hostages. After the event, it felt powerless to retaliate because it did not want to risk the lives of innocent bystanders.

There then followed a wholly gratuitous demonstration of American helplessness. The administration wanted to close Beirut Airport. Instead of doing so on its own, however, it chose to ask for the help of allies. It asked for a boycott of the airport, hardly a draconian measure. The response was, as one American official put it, a "deafening silence." Britain, the most cooperative ally, said it would think it over. Other allies found even that effort superfluous. The boycott idea ended in abject failure.

A few months later, when the U.S. diverted a planeload of *Achille Lauro* hijackers to a NATO base in Sicily, President Reagan wanted the hijackers and the ringleader, Abul Abbas, to continue on to the United States to face American justice. But in deference to the sensibilities of the Italian prime minister, the U.S. turned them over to Italy. Italy kept the small fry, and let Abbas go. For Italy, deference to American sensibilities turned out to be less

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important than its own perceived national interest (defined in this case as deference to Arab sensibilities). In the interest of "alliance relations," the major achievement of this risky military action (the capture of a big-league terrorist) was undone. After the affair, and in relentless pursuit of these same relations, President Reagan sent a special envoy to Italy to soothe *Italian* feelings. Italy magnanimously agreed to be soothed.

These incidents, though relatively minor, dramatically illustrate a certain tendency in American foreign policy: an inordinate preoccupation with—and thus an inordinate subordination to—the wishes of "the allies." The result is what might be called the multilateral fallacy: the idea that for American foreign policy it is not only unwise, but somehow illegitimate, for the U.S. to act without allied support.

IN THE LAST half decade, American attempts to marshal multilateral action at critical times have produced a long and dismaying list of failures. After the invasion of Afghanistan, the shooting down of the Korean airliner, and the crushing of Solidarity in Poland, the first, instinctive U.S. move was to round up support for sanctions. Consider the results. The American grain embargo turned into a one-country affair. Indeed, it was even undercut by substitute suppliers. After the KAL disaster, the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Association called for a 60-day boycott of Soviet flights, a sanction hardly commensurate with the offense, but still something. NATO cut that to 14 days, and three states refused to honor even that. When the U.S. attempted to stop the sale of gas pipeline equipment to the Soviets, it caused such a crisis within the alliance that Reagan had to back down. Even an Olympics boycott proved too onerous for some allies, such as France.

In some cases, naturally, there is nothing one country can do alone. It must rely on allies. Single-nation boycotts don't work. But the U.S. might have learned a lesson: if in those cases where allied support is crucial the U.S. meets indifference or rebuff, why, in those cases where unilateral options are available, does it still choose to subordinate its policy to that of reluctant allies? Certainly a $300-billion-a-year military can find a way to close Beirut Airport.

The classic example of how the multilateral fallacy skews foreign policy debate is Grenada. Instead of asking the fundamental question—whether the overthrow of the Coard-Austin regime was in the best interest of Grenadans and in the security interest of the U.S.—the debate focused on two peripheral issues.

The first was whether American medical students were really in danger, as if the principal functions of the American military were those of an A-Team rescue squad. The second was the debate over what allies—Britain, the Organization of American States, France (!)—thought about the operation. Until success (and thus domestic support) was assured, critics, unable to make their own case why the invasion was wrong, argued instead that the allies thought it was.

Even the Reagan administration, in the midst of this unusual exercise in unilateralism, felt acutely enough the requirements of the multilateral game to counter with its own elaborate version. On the day of the invasion, the prime minister of a neighboring Caribbean island was imported to Washington. Her claim, issued on behalf of an alliance of dubious standing of tiny islands, was that she had invited the U.S. to invade. So there.

This is not to say, of course, that the U.S. should not welcome support from even the tiniest nation. It is to say that the U.S. should not have to depend on it. In American foreign policy debates, it should not be necessary for one side or the other to claim the backing of Dominica.

Or even of Britain or France. On issues directly involving them, it goes without saying that their consent is necessary. If the U.S. is going to place missiles in Europe, or change NATO defense strategy, it cannot and should not do so unilaterally. But of what possible interest can Europe's views on the Caribbean be? For Europe, the Caribbean is a memory. For the U.S., it is a strategic frontier.

KING HASSAN of Morocco was recently asked why he did not consult with his Western allies before concluding a precipitous union of Morocco with Qaddafi's Libya. He replied, "Why consult with people you know are going to say no?"

The advice of allies, on issues on which their vital interests are not engaged, can be counted on to incline toward restraint. This is all the more true for advice to a superpower. For two reasons. The Grenada case illustrates the first. As a superpower, the U.S. has real interests everywhere. Its allies have local interests, but a universe of opinions. The U.N. General Assembly, where Togo can weigh in on Timor, is the reductio ad absurdum of this phenomenon. And opinion, when divorced from real responsibility, tends toward a distressing high-mindedness. It becomes a counsel of passivity, morally satisfying and blissfully irresponsible. The first instinct is to seize the moral high ground—to urge caution, diplomacy, in a word, inaction—and leave the grubby strategic low ground to the U.S.

America's allies, however, counsel inaction not just because most of the world is far away, but also because they are differently situated in it. They are necessarily weaker, more dependent, more exposed than the U.S. Europe faces huge Soviet land armies and a palisade of Soviet missiles. Latin America faces subversion, often Cuban- or Soviet-sponsored. The Middle East faces terror and terrorist states on all sides. Foreign policy in such circumstances will tend toward quiescence: trying to hold to the status quo, and making concessions, if necessary, to buy time or peace. Good counsel for a dependency, bent only on self-preservation; bad counsel for an alliance leader, on whom falls the task of deterring aggressors.

Allies may be so vulnerable to domestic critics or foreign enemies that they cannot assert their interests. They may

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be so vulnerable that they cannot even *express* these interests. Few of Nicaragua's neighbors can say in public what their leaders told the Kissinger Commission in private. This doesn't apply just to fifth-rank powers. The day after the U.S. capture of the *Achille Lauro* hijackers, the West German government refused to comment. "But," reported the *New York Times*, "they noted privately that they were delighted by the outcome."

The cowardice and hypocrisy should not surprise. They are inevitable. They follow logically from rational calculation by allies of the costs and benefits of opposing American action.

Take Central America, where the U.S. is constantly urged to follow the lead of the Contadora countries in seeking an accommodation with the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The Contadora nations—Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela—are invariably described as being closer to the scene, more in touch with the realities of Central America, and thus better able to bring about a solution. In fact, these countries cannot bring Nicaragua to do anything. Indeed, the whole of the OAS cannot bring the Sandinistas to honor their written pledge to the OAS (in exchange for hemispheric support, at the climax of the 1979 revolution) to establish a democratic and pluralistic political order.

It is either an illusion or a deception to hold that weak and unstable countries, like Colombia or Mexico, are better suited than the region's superpower to bend the course of the Sandinista revolution. (Nor is it clear why meddling in Nicaragua's "internal affairs" by marginally nearer neighbors is any more legitimate than by the U.S.) Contadora, like the other multilateral panaceas offered for American foreign policy dilemmas, is at best an adjunct to an independent, self-confident, and self-directed American foreign policy. It is not a substitute.

WHY HAS the United States accepted so passively the yoke of multilateralism? For one thing, it flows from America's deepest national instinct: the democratic impulse. Americans have the feeling that abroad, as at home, one should act with popular support. In the international arena that means having world public opinion on one's side.

This attachment to democracy is touching, but far too expansive. It amounts to representation without taxation. The man in the street in Paris does not have to bear the consequences of, say, a Soviet-sponsored base in Central America. The man on the street in Peoria does. The opinion of Paris enjoys the luxury of distance and disengagement (and, ultimately, American protection). It would be nice for Peoria to have Paris on its side. But why, if Peoria feels otherwise, should Paris's views be decisive?

A second source of the multilateralist impulse is America's postwar conversion to the idea of an international order. American leaders placed heavy blame for the Second World War on the failure of the League of Nations, and in turn on America's refusal to support it. This time the U.S. would wholly embrace internationalism. The idea was to work with the other great powers to ensure a stable world order. The centerpiece of this idea was to be the United Nations.

It very quickly became apparent, however, that this internationalist vision was simply not going to work. Turkey and Greece, the Berlin crisis, and the Soviet rejection of the Baruch Plan for international control of atomic weaponry all demonstrated that the antagonism between the superpowers was too deep to permit them to collaborate in running the world.

The U.S. then gradually moved to a second strategy. If not internationalism, then multilateralism. If not the U.N., then NATO (and SEATO and CENTO and so on). Stability and peace would depend not on the world but on the free world, on allies.

The multilateral idea is, of course, a strategic necessity and, for the West, an expression of shared political values. Unfortunately, it has also been invested with the same legitimizing, almost sacred, authority that had initially been accorded the internationalist idea. Wilsonian moralism has been repackaged. The notion remains that one can act justly in the world only if one is acting as the agent of some legitimating supranational structure. Only the choice of instrument—once internationalist, now multilateralist—has changed.

The results are mixed. For the U.S., the core of the multilateralist idea is the notion that what is worth defending is not just the American homeland, but a system of democratic states. That has given the U.S. an "alliance perspective" in its choice of foreign policy ends. That is to the good, particularly considering the history and appeal of American isolationism. Unfortunately, an accepted corollary of the multilateral idea is the notion that these states should have a moral, sometimes an actual, veto over all defensive acts, no matter how peripheral to their interests, taken by the U.S. That has saddled the U.S. with an "alliance perspective" in its choice of foreign policy means. And that is unfortunate, because it robs unilateral American action of its legitimacy, and unilateral American action is often necessary. The allies are often simply not free agents. If the United States does not act—in Grenada, in Nicaragua, in the Middle East, as it once did in Greece and Berlin—no one will.

The lesson is not that the United States should throw over the allies, which is where Irving Kristol's global unilateralism is heading. But that it should be far more assertive in leading them when possible (fighting terrorism, for example) and in ignoring them when necessary (in Central America, for example). The alliance leader should not be less attentive to alliance interests. It should simply be less paralyzed by alliance advice.

TODAY attachment to multilateralism derives, finally, from a third source. It is a desire for the consequences of multilateralism: quiescence. The multilateral fallacy conveniently relieves the U.S. of its responsibilities

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as a great power. It dissolves them in the illusion of American coequality with its allies. This, for Americans, wary and weary of their largely unsought global responsibilities, is a consummation—an abdication—much to be wished.

Multilateralism did not always have this appeal. The legitimacy of unilateral American action was far more accepted 30, even 20, years ago. Why? Because multilateralism then had different consequences. As Peregrine Worsthorne recently pointed out in the *American Spectator* (in a piece *defending* Europe from American alliance-bashers), in the early postwar period when the allies were weak vis-à-vis the U.S., alliances "constituted no kind of restraint on the use of American power; quite the opposite, since alliances, in effect, gave respectability and multilateral legitimacy to what, in effect, was unilateral American action, as in Korea or even in Vietnam. . . ." Indeed, "alliances once upon a time facilitated . . . American unilateralism; today they tend sometimes to be more a hindrance than a help." Accordingly "opponents of the energetic use of American power are nowadays all for alliances."

In the end, the wish to abdicate is perhaps the deepest reason for the multilateral vogue. It gets America off the hook. The burdens of empire are heavy, and Americans have never been greatly impressed by its rewards. What better way to avoid both than by citing the reservations of friends?

It is a great irony that a superpower should become prisoner to multilateralism. One would expect such timidity elsewhere. A few months ago Prime Minister Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe announced his intention to scrap his country's constitution, brokered by Britain, supported by the West, and accepted in 1979 by all parties to the Rhodesian civil war.

When asked why he would risk Zimbabwe's international reputation for this deplorable idea, Mugabe replied, "When we believe that we are right, the Western world can say what it wants." And what of those in the West who object to his plans to rewrite the constitution? They should "go hang."

Americans have little to learn from Mugabe on the subject of constitutionalism. Unilateralism is another matter. Is there no way in American to say "go hang"?

Meet Roger Stone, Washington's slickest operator.

STATE-OF-THE-ART SLEAZEBALL

BY JACOB WEISBERG

"ROGER STONE is back working in New Jersey and that could be bad news for state Democrats." So begins a typical behind-the-scenes piece in the *Trenton Times* about the supposed enfant terrible of Northeastern political strategy. It seems the political consultant and lobbyist Roger Stone, who engineered Governor Thomas Kean's 1981 campaign, has a plan for "the creation of a permanent Republican majority for New Jersey." Stone told the credulous reporter not only that he would install a Republican majority in the state legislature in 1985, but that he would replace Democratic senator Frank Lautenberg with Kean in 1988, and elect Congressman Jim Courter governor in 1989.

The *Trenton Times* is not alone in falling for Stone's self-generated image as kingmaker. Ronald Reagan, Jack Kemp, and Richard Nixon all think he has the ability to drive nails into the coffin of the Democratic Party. Rupert Murdoch, Fortune 500 CEOs, and Caribbean heads of state pay Stone to lobby these men. He's part of a new breed of Washington influence-peddlers who help politicians get elected and then visit them on behalf of private interests. It is hard to say how Stone (age 32, salary $450,000) became the best in the business. But in looking at what he does, one discovers the art of political gold mining. If you're well connected, and not too ideological or scrupulous, today's Washington is a boomtown.

Stone's specialty within the powerhouse consulting firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Atwater is making Republican candidates appeal to traditionally Democratic voter groups: blacks, Jews, Hispanics, and especially blue-collar Catholics. "If you can move them into the Republican coalition, you will have victory in the Northeast," he says. Because Stone, who managed the Northeast for Reagan in 1980 and 1984, is seen as having wooed these voters away from the Democrats, candidates for Congress and governorships are lining up outside his firm's lavish Alexandria office to pay him upward of $100,000 to work on their campaigns. "He has tried to appeal outside the usual class of Republican voters," says Kemp, whom Stone is advising about the 1988 election. "He knows the Republican Party has to drop its country club mentality."

It is often ironically noted that the foremost Republican

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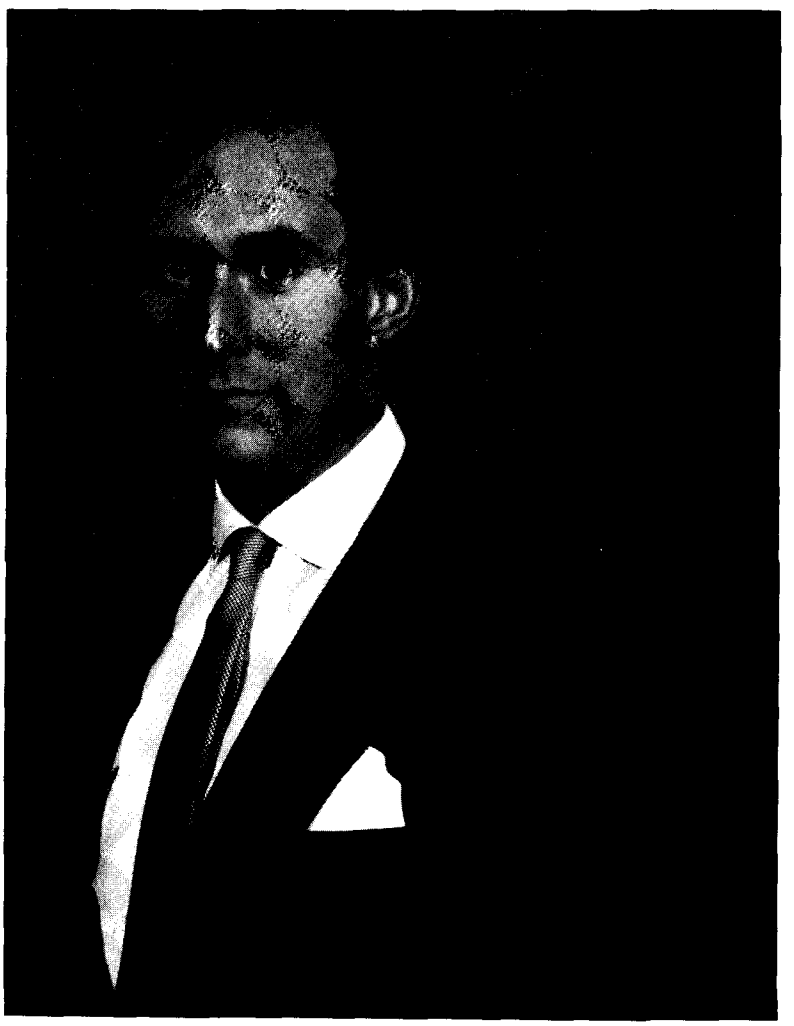
authority on blue-collar voters has a taste for $700 double-breasted suits and Mercedes sports cars. But Stone is rarely attacked for his assertion that there is a science of winning blue-collar votes. When you ask him how he lures white ethnics to the Republican side, he says he appeals to them as individuals rather than as a group. When you ask for specifics, he says he emphasizes "incentive economics and traditional values," as if Republicans would never think to campaign on those issues without his expensive counsel. Stone's partner Lee Atwater recently told the *Washington Post* that he studies the *National Enquirer* every week, since it's the literary staple of America's swing voter. All this "expertise" amounts essentially to a respectable veneer for what Stone and his firm really offer: connections, hype, and hardball negative campaigning.



Stone is widely credited with making the difference in Thomas Kean's narrow victory in the 1981 New Jersey governor's race. This was achieved by portraying the liberal Republican contender as a conservative supply-sider. Stone convinced Kean to campaign on the promise of a tax cut; once elected, Kean raised taxes. He also convinced prominent friends like Kemp to do television spots for Kean, assuring him victory in the Republican primary. "I don't advocate candidates' changing their positions—just trimming their sails," Stone says. "I do have principles."

Stone's connections to the bigwigs of the Republican Party (or the illusion thereof) account in part for his tremendous popularity with wealthy unknowns. "Roger lent me credibility," a Republican pol named Richard Bernstein, who lost a race for New York City comptroller, told the *New York Times* in 1982. It's a promotion racket—for $100,000, Stone tells small-fry candidates, you too can be taken seriously. But office-seekers like Bernstein hire Stone based on the impression that he handles the political future of everyone from Jack Kemp to Jeane Kirkpatrick. Asked about his oft-noted relationship to Kirkpatrick, Stone said, "We talk politics—I take her at her word that she doesn't want to run for the Senate or for president," indicating with a wave of the hand that he advises her on her political future. Kirkpatrick told a different story. She remembered that someone named Roger Stone called her once. She said she didn't wish to sound rude, but they "have no relationship whatsoever."

If the impressive names Roger Stone likes to drop don't convince you to spend your money at Black, Manafort, Stone & Atwater, his reputation for "hardball politics" will. Stone's failed effort to elect Jeffrey Bell to the Senate in 1982 included wide distribution of photos of Bell's primary opponent, Millicent Fenwick, chatting with Bella Abzug, and attacked her supposed left-wing views, which are actually no more liberal than Governor Kean's. The scurrilous congressional campaign Stone organized for Tommy Evans stigmatized Delaware incumbent Thomas Carper as a wife-beater. Often, as with the Evans-Carper race, the low blows backfire. But Stone rarely mentions the many second-place finishers he has backed—from Lew Lehrman to Prescott Bush—when he brags about his track record. He doesn't like to be associated with losers, even while he's working for them. In 1984 Stone backed Mary Mochary, who challenged New Jersey senator Bill Bradley. "Roger was characteristically bad-mouthing his client, saying she wasn't up to it," a fellow consultant recalls. "He was being paid to say she would do well and already he was working to dissociate himself from her in Washington."

Stone's close relationship to Washington reporters is legendary. He supplies them with off-the-record stories and good quotes on background. In exchange, they print the dirt he plants about his enemies and hype his new clients and valuable services. "He is an expert at dropping stuff unfavorable to his opponents," says a political writer who has used and been used by Stone for years. "And he is very accurate. You don't last long at that game if you leak bullshit." Several correspondents confirmed that Stone is one of the best sources in Washington for "inside

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dirt." On the Bitburg controversy, for example, Stone is said to have indicated which White House staffers insisted on proceeding with the controversial visit. None of these reporters wanted to risk losing a shovelful in the future by speaking for attribution.

STONE APPARENTLY has been at this business since early childhood. He says he became a Republican at age 12, after a neighbor in Norwalk, Connecticut, gave him a copy of Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*. Stone was devastated by Goldwater's defeat, but remained fully devoted to the party, rising through the ranks of youth groups like Teenage Republicans, College Republicans, Young Republicans, and the Young Americans for Freedom. As a 19-year-old student at George Washington University, Stone was the youngest Watergate dirty trickster. On orders from CREEP boss Bart Porter, Stone hired Michael McMinoway—known as "Sedan Chair II"—to infiltrate the McGovern campaign and report back. Using the pseudonym "Jason Rainier," Stone made contributions to the New Hampshire McCloskey campaign in the name of supposed left-wing groups like Young Socialist Alliance. He then sent the receipts along with an anonymous letter to the *Manchester Union-Leader*. He also recommended that CREEP hire a fellow student named Theodore Brill, who was subsequently paid $150 a week to spy on "radical groups." Stone says the ideas for this "kid stuff"—none of which was actually illegal at the time—emanated from Charles Colson, and that if he had refused to do it, CREEP would have fired him and gotten someone else. Stone's Watergate involvement made headlines again last year during the Meese confirmation hearings, when a note saying "Roger Stone bagman for paid informant in McGovern campaign, kept his mouth shut so they can't touch him" disappeared from Meese's 1980 campaign files.

In 1974 Senator Robert Dole fired Stone, who was working in his office, after Jack Anderson wrote a column detailing Stone's Watergate involvement. Unwilling or unable to work for elected officials, Stone worked on campaigns. In 1975, frustrated by how difficult it was for Republican candidates to raise money, Stone founded the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) with a friend from high school, Terry Dolan, and a future partner, Charlie Black. In 1977 he left NCPAC to become president of the Young Republicans. The next year Stone got his first taste of political consulting working for pollster Arthur Finkelstein (who actually does advise Jeane Kirkpatrick). Reagan's 1980 campaign director, John Sears, hired Stone for the campaign in 1979.

Reagan fired Sears and Charlie Black on the day of the New Hampshire primary in February 1980. Stone stayed on for the rest of the campaign and joined Black's new consulting/lobbying firm after the election. It was then, according to Dolan, that Stone moved closer to the political center, becoming more flexible on controversial social issues. "You've got to be less ideological, or it costs you money in that business," Dolan says. But Stone's moderation has cost him points with the far right. Paul Weyrich calls him "a yuppie libertarian," and claims he is responsible for Kemp's shunning of the religious right.

Stone does not consider his Watergate involvement an especially touchy topic. According to his friend David Keene, a former strategist who is now a lobbyist/lawyer, "Roger likes the aura of having done something bad in his past. You get the feeling that he's sorry it was so minor. He likes to say, 'Watch me, I'm a tough guy.' " Stone cannot be said to shun disgraced Watergate figures. He currently serves as his friend Richard Nixon's "informal liaison" to the rest of the world. The much-publicized press dinners Nixon held at his New Jersey home last year were Stone's idea. He was also responsible for getting the 1984 Reagan campaign to talk to Nixon about strategy.

Stone says he turns to Nixon for "sage political advice." He argues that Nixon retains "a unique understanding of the electoral structure." Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller's *The Quest for the Presidency 1984* and Jack Germond and Jules Witcover's *Wake Us When It's Over* both relate the dramatic story of Stone, his partner Lee Atwater, and Reagan campaign manager (now rival consultant/lobbyist) Ed Rollins visiting Nixon in a South Carolina motel room. Nixon supposedly devised for the Reagan camp the so-called "Ohio strategy." Both campaign books give space and respect to Stone's explanation of how this strategy—which amounted to spending a lot of money in Ohio because it has 25 electoral votes—was essential to Reagan's victory in an election where he carried 49 states. The authors seem so delighted to be getting the inside story that they don't notice they're being conned.

BLACK, Manafort, Stone, and Peter Kelly (a separate firm, since Atwater sticks exclusively to campaign consulting) have parlayed their success at consulting into a profitable lobbying business. Given their connections, companies like Kamen Aerospace, Salomon Brothers, Johnson & Johnson, Rupert Murdoch's News Group, the Tobacco Institute, and the governments of Bermuda, St. Lucia, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, and Barbados are anxious to employ them as lobbyists.

According to disclosure reports filed with Congress, Kamen pays the firm $100,000 a year to push its new naval helicopter. Salomon Brothers was paying the firm $6,000 a month for work on "no specific legislation [that] is presently pending." The investment banking firm is now paying these professed Republican ideologues $20,000 a month to fight Reagan's proposal to reform the law on tax-exempt bonds. Also according to the reports, the Footwear Industries of America trade organization pays the firm $50,000 a year to fight for import quotas on shoes. The financially beleaguered Chicago Regional Transportation Authority pays the firm nearly $40,000 a year for, to quote the answer to questions on the disclosure report: "1. indefinite; 2. mass transit matters generally; 3. none." The RTA says that $40,000 isn't much to pay for "keeping the lines of communication open" with Urban Mass Transportation Authority administrator Ralph Stanley.

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Why are corporate fat cats, impoverished local agencies, and foreign governments turning in droves to Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly? "My personal access to governors, senators, and congressmen is of value to a client," Stone says. He has no qualms about selling his "access"—what used to be known pejoratively as influence-peddling. "I've helped members of Congress get elected and next term asked them to look at an issue—I don't think there's anything wrong with that. It's not illegal." Perhaps Stone learned this defense from fellow CREEPster Maurice Stans, who argued that his conduct was perfectly acceptable since it didn't violate the law. Stone adds that the question of a conflict rarely arises for him since most of his time is devoted to campaign consulting. But, he adds, his partner Charlie Black often lobbies Dole, whom he once worked for. "It's no conflict."

A week after Stone made these remarks, *Newsweek* published a story on "One-Stop Influence Shops," which said it was BMS&K policy for a partner who had worked on an elected official's campaign not to lobby that individual in office. When I asked Stone about the contradiction, he said he couldn't remember the conflict ever arising—although the rule prohibiting it was merely an "internal decision on a minor point." He repeated that the problem doesn't crop up, since his only two clients are the Bermuda government and Rupert Murdoch's News Group Inc. He says Black "handles the Hill contacts" for Murdoch, and that Bermuda isn't interested in domestic politics. (Perhaps the Bermuda government considers foreign aid a purely external affair.) Whichever of them actually handles it, neither Black nor Stone has filed the legally required congressional lobbying report for work on Murdoch's behalf. The firm has, however, registered at the Justice Department as a foreign agent for the News Group.

When I called Stone to ask about the contradiction in the *Newsweek* story, he had a few questions for me. "I track your steps everywhere," he said. "Why have you been asking people if I had a falling-out with Jack Kemp?" I told Stone that I had heard a rumor to that effect. His friend David Keene mentioned that Kemp had become upset because Stone was "repeating stories." Another source confirmed on background that Stone was in the habit of gossiping about Kemp's personal life, and that it "got him in trouble with Kemp." According to Keene, "Jack said something to him and Roger has gotten a bit more cautious."

THEREAFTER, few people I called could be restrained from describing the remarkable symbiosis between Jack and Roger before I even asked about it. Kemp's press secretary, John Buckley, called Stone "Kemp's principal political adviser," and spoke of "Jack's high regard for Stone's intellect and instincts." He said Stone was at Kemp's Super Bowl party. Shortly thereafter, Kemp himself called to say that Stone was a friend and that they spoke regularly about where he should be campaigning to keep his options open for 1988.

It is impossible to prove that Stone and Kemp ever had a falling-out, since they both deny it. It also doesn't really matter. What is interesting is how anxious Stone became over what hardly amounts to an allegation—although he seemed unconcerned that my piece would describe in detail his involvement in Watergate. Kemp is Stone's "only game in town," according to one rival consultant. But the general perception that Stone, and his partner Charlie Black, are close to Kemp brings more wealthy candidates, corporations, and crowned heads to the firm. If word got out that Stone had a falling-out with one of the Republican front-runners for 1988, it could prove terribly damaging to a business built on the fragile foundations of connections and access.

Roger Stone's success at selling his connections is another symptom of what's happened to Washington under Reagan. Republicans are inherently no less devoted to their principles than anyone else. But an unprecedented number of Reagan's top aides, including Lyn Nofziger, Michael Deaver, Stone's partner Lee Atwater, and most recently Ed Rollins, have abandoned helping Reagan make conservative ideals reality in order to sell their connections to the highest bidders—whether in service of those ideals or not. "I spent a lot of years doing things for love," Rollins told Thomas Edsall of the *Washington Post*. "Now I'm going to do things for money. . . . I think I can make between three-quarters and a million dollars." All feel that after suffering on $75,000 for a few years, they have "earned" the right to bring home six or seven figures.

IT SEEMS SILLY to accuse these former public servants of selling out their ideals to greed when they advertise the same themselves. Negative publicity about abuse of privilege selling "access" only attracts business by proving that their connections are real enough for someone to deplore them. Ken Auletta wrote in his collection *Hard Feelings* that he was surprised when Stone's friend Roy Cohn was not offended by a devastating profile he published in *Esquire* several years ago. Cohn thought it a hatchet job, but was not overly upset since the piece reinforced his reputation as a ruthless advocate for his clients. Likewise, Stone doesn't chafe at allegations of dirty tricks, since they demonstrate that he plays hardball politics. Consultant/lobbyists believe, like Nietzsche, that whatever doesn't kill them makes them stronger.

Most political strategists hope to win elections so they can join the government and implement their ideas. After Reagan was elected, Stone turned down the high-powered deputyship Rollins offered him. "I would never take a job in government," he says. "I'm interested in politics." He claims to do his part for conservative ideals by helping to elect Republican candidates. Why then did he work for Ed Koch in his 1981 reelection bid? "Koch ran in the Republican primary." Stone added that he would never work for Koch as a Democrat. "You can't work both sides of the street," he says. If those are his political principles, no one can fairly accuse Roger Stone of having betrayed them. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

After the Fall

Target
Warner Bros.

White Nights
Columbia

What happened to Arthur Penn? I don't know, and possibly no one else knows, including Penn. Yet the question is sadly pertinent. He was one of the few postwar American directors with style, intelligence, seriousness. No Penn film was as good as it might have been, especially the one that was most gabbled about, *Bonnie and Clyde*; some, like *The Left-Handed Gun* and *Mickey One*, were cumbersome with Art; some, like *The Chase* and *Night Moves*, were too symbolic to breathe; at least one, *Alice's Restaurant*, was fashion-mongering. But despite his airbrush Freudianism and chorus-line leftism, he almost always showed exceptional gifts in directing actors and in using his camera with a lyric touch. For me, *Little Big Man*, although its action sequences were uncomfortable, was his fullest achievement. His overall ambitions, which might have seemed somewhat sophomoric in another American field, at least gave him some distinction in American film.

The above paragraph is in the past tense because *Target*, Penn's latest film, seems to have been made by someone else. It doesn't have the defects of his virtues, much less vice versa. Its only connection with Penn's past—a tenuous one—is that Gene Hackman, who has worked twice before with Penn, is in it. Worse, it's a picture of some small political potential, but it has been scrupulously scrubbed clean of anything but conventional espionage action. If the director named in the credits were, say, Peter Yates or John Frankenheimer, it would not be surprising. Penn's name *is* a surprise.

The screenplay, by Howard Berk and Don Petersen, might have been subtitled *The Spy Who Went Back into the Cold*. The basic idea is good, both as plot spring and possible moral-political scenario. Hackman is first seen running a lumberyard in Texas, a conventional man with wife and troublesome 18-year-old son. His wife goes to Europe with a charter party, and word comes from Paris that she has disappeared. Hackman, too, goes to Paris, accompanied by his son, and we soon learn that he is an ex-CIA man, long retired; that the kidnapping of his wife is probably an act of revenge by foreign agents who have not forgotten or forgiven.

A number of resonant themes lurk in this situation, waiting to be dramatized; but all that Penn and Co. are interested in is action, of the most common sort, with twists that are not astonishing because we know there must be twists, and with obligatory sex innuendos of depressing banality.

Hackman slips back into action as if he had never been out of it; the son, who hadn't known about his father's past, apparently inherited his derring-do genes. Old buddies in the CIA are involved. So are the usual unusual characters (eccentric Europeans), so is a rerun of the hothouse scene from Hawks's *The Big Sleep*. So, Gawd 'elp us, are the usual wild car chases (just when I'd recovered from Friedkin's slamming around L.A.) in which, as usual, no driver or pedestrian is injured and no traffic policeman ever intervenes. As for the closing sequence, the only real puzzler is how the person who is rescued could possibly have survived up to the point of rescue.

And if you haven't watched TV this week and thus have missed this week's teleplay scene in which a father and his rebellious adolescent son finally embrace and admit they love each other, *Target* will fill the gap for you.

In the past a Penn film was minimally a subject for discussion. *Target* is merely sad.

On the other hand, if you are a Dostoyevsky buff and have seen announcements of a film titled *White Nights*, relax. Unlike Visconti's *White Nights* (1957) and Bresson's *Four Nights of a Dreamer* (1972), this film doesn't come from Dostoyevsky but from James Goldman, who wrote the script with Eric Hughes. The title is justified only latitudinally: the story takes place in northern Russia and Siberia during the months when the sun never sets.

This *White Nights* has the feel of a "pitched" picture. ("Pitching" is this decade's Movieland term for selling a project to producers.) The film seems to have started when someone—Goldman or another—"pitched" the KAL disaster of 1983 as a launchpad. Suppose the plane hadn't been shot down: suppose it had been forced to land in Soviet territory. Suppose that on board was a famous Soviet defector. Who could be more famous than—Baryshnikov?

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Macaroni. Relax. So the script is flimsy. Marcello Mastroianni and Jack Lemmon frisk engagingly as a Neapolitan and a rich American who haven't seen each other since 1946. See Naples and live. (Reviewed 11/18/85)

Shoah. The word is Hebrew for "holocaust." A nine-and-a-half-hour documentary, shown in two parts. Interviews, juxtaposed skillfully, with witnesses of the Final Solution—survivors, bystanders, German participants. *No footage that you have seen*; every moment was shot after 1976. Claude Lanzmann, the Frenchman who made the film—ten years' work in 14 countries—has contributed gravely, importantly, to history. (10/28/85)

28 Up. A British TV documentary about a widely varied group of 28-year-olds who were first filmed when seven, then at intervals since. Fascinating and unsentimentally cheering. (11/25/85)

SK

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Tremors must have run round the office, or restaurant. Then a prudent voice spoke up: ballet is great but a little special. How do we broaden the base? Suppose, came the answer, in the Siberian camp to which Baryshnikov is sent, there is an American. Not just an American, but a black who fled the Western world because he was disgusted by Vietnam. Not just an American black but a dancer (here there must have been a chorus)—Gregory Hines! Then they made the last and fatal decision: to go ahead with the picture.

Obviously I don't know if this is how *White Nights* started, but it might as well have. To the above, they added a Russian wife for Hines, played by Isabella Rossellini, who has a faint resemblance to her mother, Ingrid Bergman, in looks and talent. Then they signed Twyla Tharp as choreographer. Tharp gets chief credit for the dancing although the opening ballet is (as stated) by Roland Petit, Baryshnikov himself added some choreography, and Hines supplied (a phrase he used on Broadway) "tap improvography."

Of plot there is too much, of dancing not enough. Baryshnikov and Hines, each in his way, need no praise as dancers and deserve little praise as actors. Of course there is a number—Tharp's, I assume—in which the ballet dancer joins the tap dancer. (It could hardly have been the other way around.) Escape for the Soviet defector and true perception for the American defector are the main story dynamics, and the diabolical Colonel Chaiko of the KGB is doing his best to impede both.

Taylor Hackford directed with about the same felicity that he showed in *An Officer and a Gentleman*—i.e., not much. But *White Nights* has two assets besides the excellence of the dancing. Chaiko is played by the Polish director-actor Jerzy Skolimowski, who is just as egotistically nasty as when he was my guest on a TV program in New York 21 years ago—but here it's to some purpose. And there is the work of the excellent English cinematographer David Watkin (*The Knack, How I Won the War, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Catch-22, Chariots of Fire*). Watkin understands the title perfectly. This is especially evident in scenes where the light seems to be outside the room—strongest as seen through the windows—yet every face and form within the room is molded with that light. □

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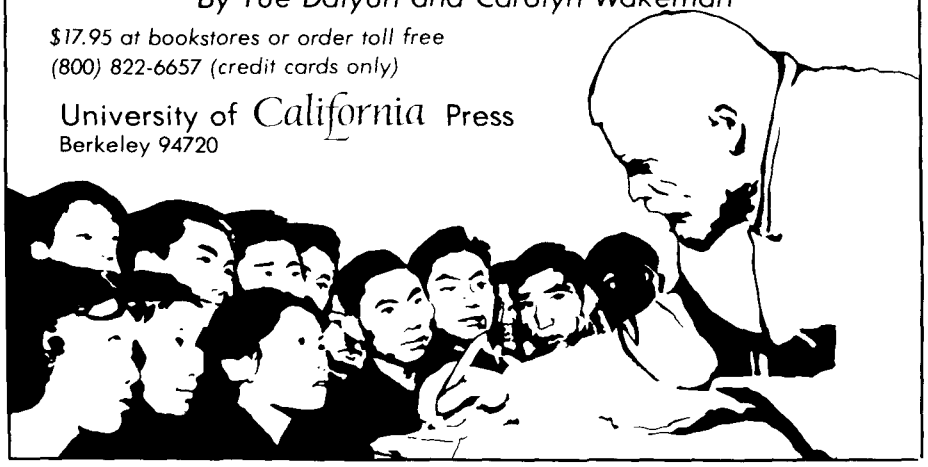

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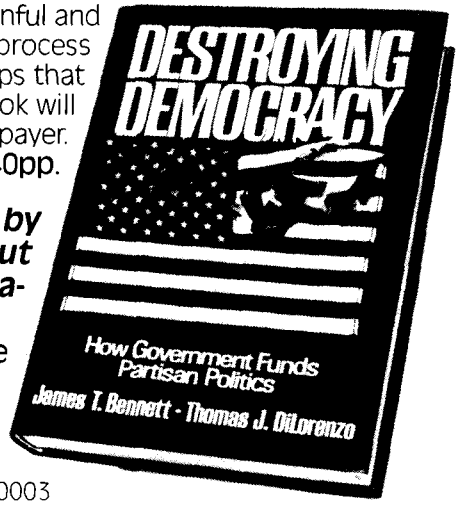

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ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Addressing a Hostile Audience

In the days when colleges required public speaking courses, students had to practice a debating technique known as "Addressing a Hostile Audience," which consisted of arguing the virtues of some position—legalized infanticide, superannuated homicide—guaranteed to enrage the listener. Wallace Shawn's new play at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, seems to me less a dramatic work than a two-hour version of that public speaking procedure. Constructed almost entirely of provocative monologues, it concludes with a long speech by the sickly young heroine, Lemon, extolling German death camps. She finds the extermination policies of the Nazis "refreshing" because killing is something that has to be done, and "why not be truthful about it." Killing is always unpleasant, but you have to admit people squash cockroaches without much remorse. After a while you get used to watching people die. You secretly even enjoy it. There's something inside all of us that likes to kill.

Aunt Dan and Lemon
by Wallace Shawn

I suspect the author anticipated a reaction to this speech not unlike those thunderstruck gapes with which the audience in Mel Brooks's *The Producers* greeted the storm trooper chorus singing "Springtime for Hitler"—maybe even a piece or two of ripe fruit shied at the scenery. How else does a debater "addressing a hostile audience" measure his effectiveness? But nobody raised a peep the night I was present. We all just sat there, as listless as late summer flies, receiving these arguments, then applauding them at the end—like the audience applauding Peter Shaffer's arguments for mutilating horses in *Equus*—tolerating in the theater sentiments we would never accept in life.

Since Lemon's speech is a monologue, nobody is allowed to suggest that because she is sickly and weak (if not because she talks too much) she herself would have been among the earliest victims of the Nazis. But then I suspect this play has very little to do with credible realities or logical thought. It is really about Wallace Shawn's relationship with his audience. So much of *Aunt Dan and Lemon* is directed out toward the house rather than in toward the other characters that it appears Mr. Shawn is trying to position himself in relation to the sorely besieged pieties of prevailing liberal thought.

For the intellectual heart of this play is a defense of the Vietnam policies of Henry Kissinger. Aunt Dan, an American friend of Lemon's mother and an Oxford don, is infatuated with our former secretary of state not just on account of his mournful countenance but because, Christlike, he took upon himself the sins of an entire nation. "The whole purpose of government," she argues, "is to use force so we don't have to." How dare the "the filthy, slimy worms, the little journalists" attack him for killing peasants? They just "sit in their offices and write their little columns," instead of expressing gratitude to Kissinger for making shattering decisions on America's behalf. Lemon's mother raises a small protest against this reasoning ("Are you saying government or Kissinger can do anything?") but for the most part she, like everyone else in the play, is a mute recipient of totally unchallenged, totally arguable opinions.

It may be exceeding my critical privileges to mention that, as editor of the *New Yorker*, Wallace Shawn's father, William Shawn, published not a few "little columns" by those "little journalists" protesting Kissinger's policies; I bring it up to suggest some reason why these arguments seem aimed at an audience presumably composed of some of William Shawn's readers, and why these arguments seem so irritable and confused. Seeing the play doesn't lead one to reargue the virtues of the Vietnam War or even to dispute Aunt Dan's defense of Kissinger. It simply stimulates questions about authorial attitude toward the issues raised, in light of what later prove to be their consequences. For Lemon's defense of the Nazis following Aunt Dan's death seems a direct result of Dan's teachings that governments survive and prosper through the use of violence: "I was on my own," Lemon says. "My education had been completed."

If you think this shows Shawn himself refuting Aunt Dan, by proving that a policy that justifies force leads to a policy that justifies extermination, the play also includes a subplot, otherwise irrelevant, which could be construed as confirming Lemon and Dan's position. This involves some underworld friends of Dan, particularly an attractive blond demimondaine named Mindy who, largely for thrills, poisons and then strangles a foreign drug dealer in the midst of having oral sex with him (echoing raunchier writings by the son of an editor of a chaste periodical popularly known as "Aunt Edna"). Dan and Lemon are both fascinated with Mindy, and Aunt Dan even has an affair with her—an unconvincing mismatch between an elegant middle-aged Oxford scholar and an amoral party girl who have in common only their mutual recognition of the necessity for violence.

I HAVE been discussing *Aunt Dan and Lemon* more as an argument than as a play since it is impossible to evaluate it in dramatic terms. Its failure to create any real engagement between characters, lack of organic development, directionless twists and turns of plot, tortured structure, unending exposition, confusing flashbacks (within flashbacks), and extreme talkiness, all suggest an aesthetic disaster of considerable proportions, if judged by any existing standards of theatrical form. Wallace Shawn, potentially one of our finest dramatists, is perfectly capable of creating strong dramatic action: *Marie and Bruce*, though occasionally disjointed, is a penetrating radiograph of a collapsing marriage. He is also capable of writing a work of genuine intellectual power, as demonstrated in the dialectical *My Dinner with Andre*, where Shawn, playing Sancho Panza to Andre Gregory's Don Quixote, countered his partner's grandiose mysticism with wry mordant realism. But the talk in *Aunt Dan and Lemon* is far from dialectical. It is more like a bleary soliloquy in a college dormitory, interrupted by the merest gesture toward theatrical context ("As we were talking," says Lemon in a typical aside, "night would fall"), causing one to leave the theater as you might stumble into Harvard Yard after having been verbally assaulted by an especially garrulous undergraduate who has proposed particularly provocative premises.

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There is, no doubt, a vein of truth in Shawn's presentation. Human beings *are* destructive and violent; governments *do* reflect the aggressive qualities of their constituents. So what else is new? But it is also true that humankind has been struggling since the beginning of civilization to overcome its discontents and control this violence with compassion and understanding, lest we all end up in clumps of corpses or piles of ashes. Liberalism, however discredited, and for all its admitted hypocrisy and frequent silliness, remains committed to the life principle, and to the quest for peace in an aggressive world. And so does conservatism, for all its confrontational "realism" and paranoid style. But this is not true of the ideological extremism expressed in *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, with its effort to elevate a strain in human nature into a general all-embracing dark principle. Which tempts one to say to Wally Shawn, Don't hang back with the brutes.

I'm not really suggesting that Wallace Shawn endorses the reactionary ideas of any of his characters, or seriously entertains their positions. He's more engaged in fashioning acts of provocation. But open season on liberals has been licensed for many years now and the trophy room is getting crowded. I suspect that it might be more daring in the present climate to defend liberalism than to ridicule it, since the hostile audience Shawn is eager to address can be safely assumed now to be conservative.

JUST A word about the production. It reveals the desperation of trying to make something theatrical out of essentially nondramatic material. Max Stafford-Clark, the director, has tried to adapt this disquisitory play to an English drawing room tradition by putting it on a creaky turntable surrounded by wing-and-border scenery decorated with green fields and fall flowers, and isolating scenes through generalized lighting. The music (selections from *Tales of Hoffmann* and *The Songs of the Auvergne*) seems arbitrary and so does much of the invented business, such as Aunt Dan's putting Lemon to bed, all the while bending her ear off with opinions. As for the actors, they have very little to play except the dialogue. Kathryn Pogson as the retiring anorexic Lemon makes the most of limited opportunities by expressing her fascist sympathies with delicacy and shyness; and Wallace Shawn engagingly lisps a

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variety of roles, particularly Lemon's embittered father. ("His teeth were rotten, his shit was rotten, and of course he stank.") But most of the other characters are reduced to sponges absorbing Dan's venomous opinions, and Linda Hunt, burdened with discharging these, is too mannered and monotonous to sugar the poison with the necessary charismatic charm.

It's puzzling that this play is set in England, since Dan (despite Miss Hunt's elegant cadences) is supposed to be American, Lemon is half-American, and the political issues are native. But then *Aunt Dan and Lemon* strikes me as an entirely puzzling performance by a valuable writer trying to create a play of ideas, but too confused by internal contradictions to compose a coherent work.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TORTURE

Torture
by Edward Peters
(Basil Blackwell, 210 pp., $24.95, $9.95 paper)

The Spectacle of Suffering
by Pieter Spierenburg
(Cambridge University Press, 274 pp., $39.50)

The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World
by Elaine Scarry
(Oxford University Press, 385 pp., $24.95)

Victor Hugo thought torture had been abolished forever. We know better. It has returned. Not just in the obvious places—Guatemala, Uganda, El Salvador, Chile, Iran, Syria, Cambodia. Not just in authoritarian regimes, with juntas hanging on to power against insurgents and economic crisis, but close to home, as close as a New York City police precinct.

How is one to understand torture? Some would say there's nothing much to understand. Torture works, hence it exists. Scarcely a handful of modern states repose on the consent of the governed; the rest rely on the water cannon, the bayonet, and the interrogation cell. Dictators have found torture an efficient substitute for the unpredictable rituals of consent; democracies have turned to torture—the French in Algeria, the British in Northern Ireland—when consent has crumbled. There is no mystery—no abyss of human nature that needs to be plumbed—about why this is so: torture is power's answer to the collapse of legitimacy.

As for the motives of torturers, these need not be mysterious either. There is never any shortage of recruits for the torture squads. It is a dirty job but the pay is good, and there is security. Torture does not call for sadism, only for the normal human capacity for splitting in two—of not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. As a job it has both squalid pleasures and some exalted ones too, like playing God.

Torturers' motives would only be a moral puzzle if we supposed humans to possess a natural empathy for the suffering of others. But why should we assume any such thing? We have little natural empathy for each other in the abstract. We value our differences as individuals more than our similarities as a species: the common fate of the body is more a matter of shame than of pride. Each fault line of difference—race, religion, class, and gender—can be widened by the lies and fantasies of propaganda into an abyss across which screams cease to signify. Torturers need not be monsters to be deaf to these screams.

As Elaine Scarry points out in her brilliant and difficult book, no one actually feels the pain of another. We live in certainty about our pain, in doubt about the reality of another's. There is nothing natural about empathy: it is a rope bridge of language suspended across the abyss that separates us from the skins of others. Cut the bridge of language, and men will stare out across the abyss at each other, as if they were gazing on racks of meat. Scarry's compassionate linguistics documents how that bridge between torturer and victim is cut. The torturer's role comes complete with the anesthetizing slang of a sub-profession. The Argentinean torturers call what they do "the dance"; in the Philippines it is called "the birthday party"; in Greece, the "tea party." These are the jokes that strip the thing itself of any incriminating significance. The victims' suffering also conspires to assist the torturer: the more inhuman the screaming and the more bestial the torment, the less human—the less incriminating—the victim can seem. Torture makes torturers: the role and the act disconnect the meanings that might otherwise implicate torturers in the fate of their victims.

Torture works, torture pleases, torture exploits our natural incapacity to feel the pain of others. There ought to be no mystery about torture's role in propping up more than half the states of the globe.

YET there is a mystery. Torture has become a scandal. We think of it now as a sign pointing to the darkest places in human nature, a symptom of a century's guilt about its own history. Yet this is puzzling. Despite loose talk about an epidemic of torture in the 1970s, it is not clear that the incidence of torture has dramatically increased. There may be more states than there were in the colonial period, more regimes dependent on the jail, the cattle prod, and the torturer's needle, but this need not mean that there are more victims. What *has* changed is the moral visibility of torture. Thanks to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and to Amnesty International, the cantonment of responsibilities at the borders of one's nation, one's race, class, or religion, has broken down. The moral internationalism built on the shame at the Gentile pharisaism that attended the destruction of European Jewry now insists that what happens in the jails of Kampala,

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Johannesburg, and Moscow is as much our business as what happens in the jails of New York or Louisiana.

This in itself is a new moment in the history of conscience. How we have got to this point—why we can no longer stand the dirty business wherever it occurs—is what Edward Peters's concise and thoughtful book sets out to explain.

TORTURE chambers are intensely moral places: torturers have to find some value higher than human life in the name of which they allow themselves to exercise their particular talents. A good Catholic inquisitor would have been scandalized by the common sense of late 20th-century liberal humanism—that there is no sin greater than deliberate cruelty inflicted on another human being. Such a scruple was blasphemous: it valued human life more highly than obedience to God's will, and to the inquisitor God's will was clear. Was it not written: Compel them to enter? And what compulsion is more persuasive than pain?

As Peters points out, torture was not a puzzle for Aristotle, Cicero, or Marcus Aurelius. Torture supposes some theory of language that establishes whose word can be trusted. Greek and Roman law distinguished between the testimony of men of honor, whose word was their bond, and slaves and *humiliores*—men of base social standing—who could not be trusted to tell the truth unless submitted to the queen of torments.

Systems of torture, Peters further points out, also imply a tacit anthropology. The inquisition divided the human race into believers and heretics, an anthropology of amnesia toward the Gospel message of the equality of all human creatures. The early state courts divided the world into honorable men whose word could be believed, and hardened criminals who could be counted on to tell the truth only under extreme duress. In these courts of the postmedieval state, torture was held to be the only sure way of eliciting the queen of proofs, the personal confession required for conviction in all capital cases. If torture did not spread north into Scandinavia and Britain, it was because northern Europe held onto the older adversarial system in which conflicting claims of prosecution and defense were assessed by a jury. In the adversarial system, confession was not required for conviction in capital cases. Looser evidential standards dispensed with the need for the queen of torments. She made her entry into British jurisprudence only in treasonous conspiracies against the king.

In *Torture and the Law of Proof*, John Langbein argued that it is a sentimental fairy tale to suppose that torture was abolished in Europe because of the moral outcries of the Enlightenment. Voltaire and Montesquieu simply echoed voices already raised against the practice for two centuries. The decisive change was in procedure: the continental system ceased to depend on the queen of proofs—confession—and hence decreased its resort to the queen of torments. The rise of imprisonment as an alternative to execution enabled judges to convict on lesser charges in cases where proof was not certain, instead of relying on torture to secure confession.

PIETER Spierenburg is less dogmatically insistent on proving that institutions matter more than mentalities. Yet he too sharpens up the fuzzy notion that torture was swept away by a wave of European sentimentality. His careful study of the rise and fall of public punishment in Amsterdam between 1600 and 1800 is anchored in Norbert Elias's theory of the civilization process. Gibbeting, public flogging, execution, and torture all came to share the mysterious opprobrium of progress. They came to be seen as barbarous vestiges of an age when the state had just seized the monopoly of judicial violence from the private army and the blood feud. Popular dislike of the torturer and the executioner in the early modern period, Spierenburg argues, was not directed at their cruelty, but at their mercenary office: for money they inflicted cruelty on the state's behalf. Only as the state's monopoly on the use of legitimate violence came to be accepted did the contempt for the mercenary character of the office decline; but as it did, opprobrium shifted to the cruelty of the ritual.

The physicality of torture and execution, which seems savage and irrational to minds used to the modern impersonal state, must be understood (as Foucault argued) according to a different symbolism of power—as an angry sovereign's chastisement of his disobedient subjects. The very figures who raised the first protests against torture—Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke, Montaigne—were at the same time

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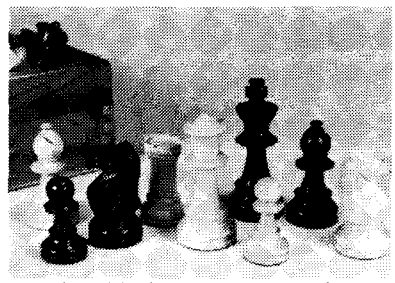

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rethinking state power not as the personalized embodiment of the sovereign's will but as a public trust, anchored in social consent rather than in fear and awe at the violence of the Father.

The new European state raised on these philosophical foundations was a Leviathan compared to the weak early modern regimes, which had depended on torture and public execution. The end of the era of torture coincided with the emergence of the modern police and prison services. Hence the paradox: torture belongs to the era of weak states. The greatest concentration of undemocratic police power ever seen in 19th-century Western Europe—Fouché's Napoleonic police—was not underpinned by torture. Torture survived, as Malise Ruthven has shown, only in the weak, archaic Neapolitan and papal states of mid-century Italy.

At the same time that torture lost its place in the new legitimation of state power, the old anthropology that justified the infliction of torture on slaves, the untree, the infamous, and the humble began to break down. Torture became a scandal at the same time that slavery, the neglect of prisoners, and the legal inequality of women and blacks became social facts that the rich and powerful had to understand as an indictment of themselves, rather than some distant disturbance in another moral galaxy.

This new consciousness—this identification with those in pain—was quite consistent with the redoubling of social distance between rich and poor. Indeed, as P. N. Furbank has suggested, it was not in spite of, but because of their admission of their essential identity with the poor that the European bourgeoisie set about their furious search for barriers of social exclusion. Class was an invention that reconciled the privileges and pleasures of status exclusion with the truth of moral and legal equality—which is one reason why the chasm of class did not serve, as the chasm of race often did on the peripheries of empire, to legitimize the use of torture.

The new mental universe, which accepted the juridical equality of all human subjects, was sustained in turn by a moral cosmopolitanism built on the ideology of free trade, the march of the mind, and the universal spread of progress and civilization. Gladstone's campaign against Neapolitan torture was only one crusade in a career of Christian moral internationalism that took up the cause of the Armenians and Bulgarians suffering under the Turkish yoke. The abolition of torture in the peripheries of the empire marched in the vanguard of this now-vanished bourgeois internationalism.

Inspired by this internationalist spirit, Hugo proclaimed the end of torture—just as it made its reappearance. As Peters shows, torture was a humble camp follower in the Great Powers' gadarene rush toward the abyss of the First World War. The old liberal cosmopolitanism evaporated in the heat of the imperial competition. Borders that were once open came to require passports. The state secret returned, and with it the state police—the Okhranka, the Deuxième Bureau, Scotland Yard. The state police built a new labyrinth of prisons and in these recesses the torture cell reemerged, at first for spies, then for terrorists.

Imperial rivalry in the decades before the First War nourished and exploited conspiracy, the secret, and the spy. The modern state engendered a new paranoia toward the "enemy without," that fantasy of encirclement and vulnerability, which legitimized its ever more frantic acquisition of police powers. The totalitarian states of the 20th century built their torture apparatus on the archipelago of institutions of surveillance and control bequeathed them by the imperial states of the 19th. The Cheka inherited the Okhranka's cells, whips, and files. The unsated land hungers and ethnic hatreds left over from 19th-century imperial quarrels were taken up and legitimated anew by communism and Nazism, and these religions in turn engendered a new anthropology of the class enemy—the Jew, the gypsy, and the kulak—who could be tortured and exterminated for the sake, once again, of some value higher than humble human life.

Most of us like to think we have awakened from this history as from a nightmare. Yet it is a kind of condescension to consign torture to a now-vanished age of religious superstition, to believe that it has no place—except in the heart of a few sadists—in a tolerant liberal culture. Liberal cultures can be blind to their own fashions in fanaticism. Consider the feeling after the Beirut hijacking and hostage drama. Nothing arouses stronger feelings than terrorism, and nothing offers a more potent justification for torture. It requires little imagination to suppose what would have happened if some Shiite gunman possessed of information about the hostages' whereabouts had fallen into the hands of a CIA operative in Beirut. The line between legitimate coercion of a suspect and torture is razor thin, and never more easily crossed than when the suspect holds alien and unpleasant beliefs, and a whole country is baying for vengeance.

If torture works, and terrorism provides moral justification on the cheap, what kind of argument can possibly prevail against its use in a case like the Beirut hijacking? The argument that torture violates a natural human inviolability is noble, but it is unconvincing when applied to terrorists whose own view about human inviolability was made manifest when they dumped the young Marine's body onto the tarmac of Beirut Airport. In such a situation, no arguments about restraint are likely to carry much conviction.

Yet it is worth observing that torture is unlikely to have much purchase on anyone who believes his pain is the price of a martyr's immortality. Even when torture works on humbler victims, it silences the flow of information that would be available to the authorities if they could count on the support of their people. A regime that depends on torture for its information comes to depend on it exclusively. In Algeria, once the police and army began to stink with the infamy of torture, it became ever more infamous for Arabs to associate with the French. If more Israeli officers succumb to their feelings in dealing with Palestinian terrorists, the West Bank will become ungovernable.

Torture works, but only in the short term. In the regimes where torture has been the mainstay—Argentina, Greece, Turkey, Chile—terrorism provided the covering permission. Where terrorism did not exist, it was invented. Yet these regimes were like card houses poised on a torturer's needle: one by one they fell apart. It is not fanciful to suppose that even General Pinochet's days are numbered.

In Argentina, when the death squads in the Ford Falcons were making their dawn raids, the boys and girls on the beach used to say to reporters, "There is no politics in Argentina." If torture ends

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politics, so of course does terrorism. Their object is the same: to strike against the trust between strangers that sustains the public realm, the political world. In the long term, even nondemocratic societies cannot function without politics, without some uncoerced debate and circulation of information. Torture clots and blocks the very flow of information it seeks, and destroys the civil society on which political stability reposes.

Torture also plays into the hands of terror. Terrorism's tactic is to provoke torture, to delegitimize societies by forcing them to descend to the same calculus as the terrorists. Terrorism is a language that seeks to force its brother—torture—to speak; torture is a linguistics of pain designed to force terror to confess. This dialogue is the death of reason and politics. The test of a nation's will to defend itself is not the license it gives to its antiterrorist squads, but its capacity to restrain its indignation for the sake of its own liberty.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

Michael Ignatieff is the author of *The Needs of Strangers* (Viking).

KEEPING UP WITH JONES

Into Eternity: The Life of James Jones, American Writer by Frank MacShane

(Houghton Mifflin, 355 pp., $18.95)

The people on the Île St. Louis still remember James Jones as a man who looked like a commando, but upon acquaintance revealed an extraordinary sweetness. His appearance suited the French preconception of how an American writer should look—an inspired savage, usually drunk—whereas his real gentleness disarmed them utterly. When I mentioned to the people who run the Brasserie St. Louis that I brought them greetings from my former writing student, Jones's daughter Kaylie, they went into raptures over the great man who'd used their restaurant as his living room; they even had to summon their daughter and her new baby from some inner recess to meet the man who'd known *les Jones*.

In fact I'd never known James Jones, although his daughter did once bring her mother, Gloria, to an end-of-the-semester party I gave for my Columbia fiction workshop. When I politely asked Mrs. Jones (who once worked as a stand-in for Marilyn Monroe) what she was doing for Doubleday, she replied, "I fuck writers." She then asked me why I was gay and wanted to know if I was afraid of women, had I ever tried one, did I think there were teeth down there. . . . I suddenly felt terribly prissy and *dépassé*, not at all the sort of writer James Jones, in his frank, searching way, would have liked.

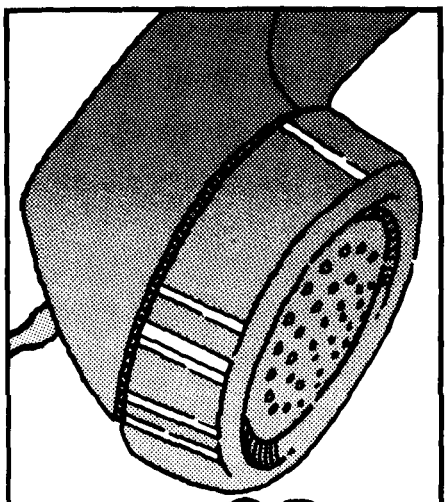
Gloria was the great love of Jones's life—she and his writing. Once, when he thought he might die, Jones left a note for Gloria: "I've always loved you an awful lot. More than I've ever loved anything or anybody. Maybe my own work I've loved as much." The letter is pure Jones in its sincerity, its sacrifice of eloquence to the graceless truth, its egotism, and its generosity.

Despite his macho exterior, Jones had none of Hemingway's alternating sadism and self-hatred. He liked to help other writers and was extremely friendly with, among others, Irwin Shaw, Peter Matthiessen, Norman Mailer, James Baldwin, Willie Morris, William Styron, and Mary McCarthy. Jones would have been incapable of displaying the malice Hemingway evinced when Scribner's asked him for a comment on *From Here to Eternity*. Hemingway said of Jones:

> Things will catch up with him and he will probably commit suicide. . . . To me he is an enormously skillful fuck-up and his book will do great damage to our country. . . . I hope he kills himself as soon as it does not damage your or his sales. If you give him a literary tea you might ask him to drain a bucket of snot and then suck the puss out of a dead nigger's ear.

So much for the literary life.

Unlike Hemingway, Jones was concerned with analyzing the relations be-



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tween men and women. His later books, so often misunderstood, can best be read in this light, especially *Go to the Widow-Maker* and *Whistle*. As Frank MacShane writes in his analysis of *Go to the Widow-Maker*, Jones researched that book by examining

> the lumpen world of male America as he found it in the West Indies. Consisting mainly of self-made men, it is a world of sports, drinking, and crude language. The men have no interior lives and spend most of their time together. Their sexual lives are unsatisfactory and most of them are maladjusted. Either they cannot perform at all or dissociate feeling from sex and settle for sensation.

Jones equated Hemingway's "big masculine bullshit" with people's need for dangerous but consoling myths—the same need that had engendered "heroes, great generals, and war." Despite this rejection of Hemingway's influence, however, Jones recognized his talent as a writer and made his Florida workshop read *The Sun Also Rises*.

Like Hemingway, Jones was born in an Illinois town. Both writers were sons of professional men (a doctor in Hemingway's case, a dentist in Jones's) and both had Christian Scientist mothers they despised. And in both cases their fathers committed suicide by shooting themselves. It occurs to me that one could build a case that the best American writers of this century have been the children of that endangered species, the small entrepreneur or self-employed professional—precisely the class to which the most had been promised by free-enterprise rhetoric and less and less delivered. Thomas Pynchon, that foe of corporate internationalism, seems to belong to this class.

Like Hemingway, Jones left the States for Paris, but Jones's Paris was less artistic than his predecessor's, and far more luxurious and worldly. Jones's large art nouveau house on the Île St. Louis, with its view of Notre-Dame and the Left Bank, became a sort of canteen for visiting American writers. But after Jones had to stop drinking, he and Gloria cultivated an ultra-chic set of the established rich, a group typified by Ethel de Croisset, a New York heiress who married a French aristocrat and still lives in the Seizième surrounded by Matisses and Giacomettis. Of all rich crowds in the world, this is the one most responsive to artists; frequenting artists (and supporting them when necessary) is as obligatory for the Paris *gratin* as charity work is for their New York counterparts.

JAMES JONES BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Such a milieu could not have stood in greater contrast to Jones's background. Jones had grown up in Robinson, Illinois. As a boy he failed to distinguish himself in sports or academic work and frequently picked fights. He entered high school in 1935, during the heart of the Depression. His father was a drunk who lost all his money and spent most of his time away from home, indulging in self-pity at the local bar. His mother once warned her son that if he masturbated his hand would turn black—and she went so far as to paint his hand while he slept in order to prove her theory.

The Army freed Jones from his dismal home life. He'd enlisted first in the air corps, but he later transferred to the famously tough 27th Infantry Regiment. He participated in the Battle of Guadalcanal. While in the Army he also discovered the novels of Thomas Wolfe, which served as his main inspiration to write—and as a model for many passages in his first published novel, *From Here to Eternity*. That Maxwell Perkins, Wolfe's editor at Scribner's, took an early interest in Jones only confirmed this association.

From Here to Eternity took four years to write; in the process Jones tore up three-quarters of everything he put on paper. During this long period of composition, just after his Army discharge, Jones lived back in his native Robinson with an older woman, Lowney Handy, who fed him, occasionally slept with him, and submitted him to her bizarre and thoroughly American philosophy drawn from bits of Zen, Emerson, xenophobia, and anti-intellectualism. She detested other women, and felt certain women always kill the artist in a man. (It never occurred to her that a woman herself might be an artist.)

Lowney believed in cold showers, early to bed and early to rise, a long morning's work on an empty stomach, and other spartan deprivations. She encouraged her disciples (for she eventually founded a writers' colony) to use double negatives and coarse language, and to copy out long passages from such manly native writers as Hemingway and Dos Passos. She forbade her boys to read the "effete" authors she referred to as

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"Walter Stevens," "Kafkia," and "Dieland Thompson."

Jones, an intensely loyal person, put up with Lowney's eccentricities—until his marriage to Gloria precipitated a crisis. Gloria tried to live at the Handy Colony, and at first Lowney was cool and correct with her, and with Gloria's niece Kate, who was visiting. But as MacShane recounts:

> One afternoon, while sitting in the living room with Kate, Gloria heard a loud crash. Lowney had just smashed through the screen door and was standing in the living room, beside herself with rage. "The only reason Jim married you," she shouted, "is that you're the best cocksucker in New York!" Gloria sent Kate out of the room, and then Lowney lunged at her with a bowie knife. Gloria and Lowney rolled around on the floor, scratching and punching, until Jones came in and separated them.

After the violence and deprivations and philistinism of the Handy Colony, Paris must have seemed a refreshing change.

DESPITE HIS years in France, Jones remained the quintessential American writer. If he often recalls Wolfe, he is just as apparently a descendant of Whitman, as can be seen in page after page of *From Here to Eternity*:

> The music came to him across the now bright, now dull, slowly burning cigaret of each man's life, telling him its ancient secret of all men, intangible, unfathomable, defying longwinded descriptions, belying intricate cataloguings, simple, complete, asking no more, giving no less, words that said nothing yet said all there was to say. The song of the one-eyed man who had driven the ox sled through the summer hills in the Kentucky mountains, the song of the Choctaw on his reservation, the song of the man who had laid the rollers for the stones heavy as death to build the glorious monument to the king.

His sympathy for the average guy, his impeccable ear for the American dialect ("Draft or no draft, they'll never get me back"), even his patient piecing together of the autodidact's "philosophy of life," make Jones the most representative spokesman of his generation. Even his omnivorous and pressing drive to narrate suits his subject—and his readers.

In his stories he reached back to his childhood, to its humiliations and bleak joys. With a sure sense of which details would "tell," he composed this passage in "The Valentine," for instance, about a paperboy awakening before dawn:

> Outside it was steely cold and the handlebars and sprocket of his bike creaked with frost when he moved them. The air burned his nose like dry ice, and as he tucked the scarf up over it and put on his goggles, his eyes were already watering. The freezing cold air flushing the last threads of sleepiness and of reluctance out of his mind, he took off on his bike, giving himself joyously up to, and embracing happily, the discomfort which always made him feel important and as though he were accomplishing something, riding the bike downtown along deserted streets of darkened houses where nothing moved or shone and people slept except for a few boys like himself, scattered across town, converging on the Newsstand where the city papers would already have been picked up by the owner of the train.

In his *Viet Journal*, written during the closing days of the war, Jones speaks with lucid objectivity of the farce being played out around him—yet without ever losing sympathy for the American soldiers involved. His self-created Illinois childhood and his own military service gave him that sympathy; his years as a famous writer in Paris provided the objectivity, as did his profound skepticism about politics. He

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summarized his view of the war by remarking, "They're shits and we're shits so we might as well be for us as for them."

Frank MacShane's biography never forces Jones into a Procrustean bed of preconceptions (one of the biographer's chief temptations), nor does it condescend to its subject (the other temptation). Jones's virtues (his intense loyalty, his burrowing intelligence, his fortitude under hostile criticism, his genuine curiosity about other people) are as graphically presented as are his shortcomings (his clumsy style, his alcoholic rages, his often unrealized artistic intentions). Best of all, the book gives a sense of the animal reality of the man with "his thick neck, broad shoulders, Western clothes and turquoise bracelets," and his peculiarly penetrating independence of mind. After all, it was Jones who made this complex observation: "The middle class rejects anything that is dishonest. Thus they miss the whole language of the common man—the rich texture of it." Only an uncommon man could have grasped that slippery truth about the elegance of falsehood.

EDMUND WHITE

Edmund White's new novel is *Caracole* (Dutton). He lives on the Île St. Louis.

THE MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA

Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov edited by Annette Michelson translated by Kevin O'Brien

(University of California Press, 344 pp., $35)

If Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) is the least recognized of major filmmakers, it is only partly because film history has yet to sort itself out. Vertov's oeuvre confounds film history as it is generally conceived. To recognize his centrality is to open oneself to the possibility that the most passionate and inventive movies of the past eight decades may not have been the narrative features at all, but rather the documentaries and the experimental films, the seven-minute animations and the four-minute rock videos, which, along with Hollywood B-movies and the entire production of Third World behemoths (India, China, the Philippines), have been resolutely marched to the medium's margins.

Vertov's case, as the distinguished film scholar and theorist Annette Michelson suggests in her lengthy and brilliantly argued introduction to this collection of the filmmaker's manifestos, journal excerpts, and production notes, is a special one—"a forty-year history of the most distrustful and hostile reception and of systematic critical neglect." For a good many years, Vertov suited no one's notions of cinema. "Shoved hastily and distractedly into the ash can of film history," writes Michelson, "his major works were left to tick away through four decades like time bombs."

The incendiary metaphor is scarcely unintentional. These fiercely kinetic films have an explosive energy, fueled by a high-octane combination of Leninist fervor, technological optimism, and modernist rigor. The most radical of the Soviet montage theorists, Vertov was an implacable foe of what he termed "acted cinema," and thus totally at odds with his gifted colleagues Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, and Alexander Dovzhenko, not to mention the Stalinist hacks who followed them. Although he seemingly left no heirs in Russian (or East European) filmmaking, he was rediscovered by the West (first in France) during the 1960s, as part of a general resurgence of interest in the short-lived Soviet avant-garde.

No longer an obscure eccentric, Vertov posthumously emerged as the precursor of a diverse collection of filmmakers. Anticipating the cinema verité of Jean Rouch (as well as the candid camera of Allen Funt), Vertov is the spiritual father of the New Left documentary in all its forms, from guerrilla newsreel and homemade agitprop to the ultra-refined dialectics of Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard. At the same time, he is the forerunner of several leading tendencies in contemporary North American and European avant-garde film—his use of contrapuntal sound and vertical montage is echoed in the work of Peter Kubelka; his reflexive, anti-illusionist strategies paralleled by the films of Ken Jacobs; his complicated editing structures and fascination with daily life suggesting the equally misunderstood oeuvre of Stan Brakhage.

Vertov's masterpiece of 1929, *The Man with a Movie Camera*, may be the most self-reflexive movie ever made—a primer, in fact, for film viewing. Not until the mid-1960s, with Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* and Brakhage's *Scenes from Under Childhood*, would anyone attempt a film of such audacious complexity. This ecstatic city symphony, a sort of cinematic *Ulysses*, or cubist documentary, was so far ahead of its time that one can almost forgive the usually generous Eisenstein for labeling it a work of "formalist jackstraws and unmotivated camera mischief." Even in 1971, Rouch called it "a film which we have not completely understood."

ALTHOUGH Michelson doesn't tell us much about Vertov's origins, he seems to have been (like Eisenstein) a product of the provincial Jewish intelligentsia. He was born Denis Arkadievich Kaufman, the eldest son of a Bialystok librarian. While studying medicine in St. Petersburg, the 20-year-old Kaufman fell under the influence of Mayakovsky and Russian Futurism, taking the name Dziga Vertov, a Russian-Ukrainian hybrid meaning "perpetual motion."

Vertov's first project was a "Laboratory of Hearing" for the production of experimental phonographic discs; when the revolution broke out, he volunteered for the Bolshevik cinema committee. The Soviet film was famously pioneered by men scarcely out of their teens. Vertov was 22 when he became the editor of the first Soviet newsreel, *Kinonedilia*. (There he met his future wife and lifelong colleague, Elizaveta Svilova.) Later he left his editing table to serve as a battlefield cameraman—escaping burning trains, dodging counterrevolutionary bandits, experiencing the frontline urgency that he would at-

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tempt to maintain throughout his career.

After the civil war, Vertov, Svilova, and his younger brother Mikhail (another battlefield cameraman) launched a new newsreel—named *Kinopravda* for Lenin's newspaper—and "the struggle for a non-acted October." Vertov fired his first polemical salvo by consigning all previous movies to history's dustbin: "WE proclaim the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and the like, to be leprous . . . WE affirm the future of cinema by denying its present." The kinoks, as the producers of *Kinopravda* called themselves, considered narrative to be a bourgeois mystification: "We oppose the collusion of the 'director-as-magician' and a bewitched public. . . . Film drama is the opium of the people."

LIKE Brecht, Vertov hoped to produce a conscious, self-aware, critical audience: "Kino-drama clouds the eye and brain with a sweet fog. Kino-eye opens the eyes, clears the vision." For the kinoks, the liberation of cinema from the oppressive influence of "music, literature, and theater" and the development of revolutionary proletariat consciousness were virtually identical. In the aesthetic wars that characterized postrevolutionary Russia, Vertov allied himself with the constructivists Rodchenko and El Lissitsky, whose militant anti-illusionist bias supported his own. Where Eisenstein was a man of wide-ranging cultural interests (his most celebrated essays link the film language of D. W. Griffith to the novels of Charles Dickens and his own theory of montage to the Chinese ideogram), Vertov was a creature of modern times: Futurism, Revolution, Americanitis. "Hurrah for the poetry of machines, propelled and driving," he exulted in one 1922 manifesto.

Mocked as "kino-cowboys," the kinoks experimented with bizarre angles, extreme close-ups, and concealed cameras, shooting off the cuff in the midst of life:

> We leave the film studio for . . . that whirlpool of colliding visible phenomena, where everything is real, where people, tramways, motorcycles, and trains meet and part, where each bus follows its route, where cars scurry about their business, where smiles, tears, deaths, and taxes do not obey the director's megaphone.

They saw themselves as scientists. "Our group doesn't connect either its existence or its work with what is called 'art.' "

After 23 issues of *Kinopravda*, Vertov graduated to longer, more elaborate films. *Stride, Soviet* (1926) is an extended juxtaposition of prerevolutionary underdevelopment with the dynamism of postrevolutionary life, celebrating industrial forms with gusto enough to make Fernand Léger's contemporary *Ballet mécanique* seem Luddite by comparison. The same year's *One Sixth of the World*, commissioned by the Soviet export agency, is a dizzying travelogue, punctuating footage from all over the Soviet Union with ecstatic declamatory titles in the fashion of Mayakovsky or Whitman. Although the film proved Vertov's first popular success, and was well received in the West for its "abstract" and "experimental" qualities, the cultural temperature was beginning to drop. The forced industrialization that Vertov celebrated was bringing with it the increasing bureaucratization of the regime, and the first stirrings of a Stalinist aesthetic. *The Eleventh Year* (1928), another paean to industrial development—like Eisenstein's *October*, commissioned to celebrate the revolution's tenth anniversary—was accused of "formalism." Still, the commissars had seen nothing yet.

WITH some difficulty, Vertov managed to produce *The Man with a Movie Camera*, a summation of all his work thus far, and a film that, after 55 years, has lost none of its power to amaze. Conjoining Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa in one teeming metropolis, the film matches the rhythms of the workday to the cycle of life, and the mechanisms of moviemaking to the processes of industrial production. Made without titles but encyclopedic in its deployment of cinematic devices (from superimposition to montage to variable speed filming to optical effects), *The Man with a Movie Camera* was the film that Vertov considered to have at last broken free from "the tutelage of literature and the theater." Among other things, Vertov's masterpiece has the remarkable effect of encouraging the viewer to identify with the filmmakers' activity, even as it dazzles the eye with its intricately cross-referenced cascade of visual rhymes, documentary tropes, and urban sight gags. The structure of *The Man with a Movie Camera* can only be fully appreciated by studying the film on an editing table, a paradox that makes all the more poignant Vertov's assertion that although his methods were "the most unexplored in cinema," "thankless," requiring "superhuman efforts of organization, technique, way of life, and so on," he still hoped to "achieve the victory of realism over formalism and naturalism and become a poet who can be understood not by a few people but by millions."

Even fewer people understood Vertov's first talkie, aptly titled *Enthusiasm* (1931). Redeeming the Futurist phonographic experiments of his youth, this almost wordless film is predicated upon abrupt audio transitions and cacophonous machine music, making boldly symphonic use of asynchronous, contrapuntal, and artfully mismatched sound. (Vertov is still one of the few filmmakers to have perceived sound as a thing in itself; in its way, *Enthusiasm* was as advanced for its time as *The Man with a Movie Camera*.) The film was attacked for its raucous "hallelujah-ism"; Vertov's strident vanguard assertions were increasingly out of step. ("I myself no longer know whether I am a living person or a diagram invented by my critics," the beleaguered filmmaker noted in his journal.) Throughout the production of *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934), Vertov was harassed by the doctrinaire Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, for whose sake he had criticized his own masterpiece of five years earlier: "In previous work I frequently presented my shooting methods outright. I left the construction of those methods open and visible. . . . And this was wrong."

The hagiographic *Three Songs*—a mixture of lyrically edited stock footage and the cinema's first direct interviews, produced when the Lenin cult was at low ebb, even as Stalin's was cresting—was the most successful movie Vertov ever made, and virtually the last. He completed only one more personal project, a 1937 "cine-song" about motherhood. His career ended as it had begun, editing newsreel footage. But there was a cosmic gulf between Vertov's exuberant *Kinopravda* and the *News of the Day*, on which he worked as an anonymous craftsman until his death in 1954.

UNLIKE Eisenstein, who had an enormous international reputation as well as a personal (and necessarily masochistic) relationship with Stalin, Vertov could be easily neutralized as a crank. Although it seems hardly a coincidence that he fell into obscurity at pre-

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cisely the time Stalin put the old Bolsheviks on trial, the punishment he received is far closer to the economic humiliation accorded Hollywood overreachers than the more drastic fates suffered by Babel or Meyerhold.

The journal excerpts that make up nearly a third of *Kino-Eye* provide a vivid portrait of Vertov's internal exile. "Anxiety day and night," wrote the perpetual motion man in 1934. "I used to think I'd always be tireless. Not so. They've exhausted me. My brain's so tired that a breeze knocks me over." And later that year he bitterly parodied the cultural apparatchiks who ground him down.

> You wish to continue working on the poetic documentary? Go right ahead. You have our general permission. . . . You can sit in your damp hole beneath the water tank and above the sobering station for drunks. You can stand in line for the toilet, for the kitchen burner, the sink, the streetcar, and the bath. With no elevator, you can climb up to the sixth floor ten times a day.

Trapped between the water tank and the sobering station, Vertov dreamed of making a documentary in Spain, quoted Lenin ("the production of new films, imbued with communist ideas and reflecting Soviet reality, must begin with the newsreel"), and vainly railed against the rewriting of Russian film history ("Why is the era of the Civil War missing from your remembrances?"). Disappearing further and further down the memory hole, he found his accomplishments and name omitted from official accounts and exhibitions of Soviet film. In his diaries, he took to referring to himself in the third person, as if to prove that his public self did once exist.

Twenty years after Vertov proclaimed the old cinema "leprous," he found himself outflanked and quarantined.

> By forcing, day after day, hour after hour, year after year on myself and those around me the suspicion that I'm suffering from the leprosy of formalism, they place me in the hopeless situation of complete isolation. Who will offer his hand to a leper? Who will agree to work with him? Who will trust him with a real production, intended for healthy people?

In the end, Vertov is not simply the unwitting victim of Stalin, or of a blighted revolution (terms he might well have rejected), but also of another kind of arbitrary and authoritarian regime: the dictatorship of received ideas, which only a very few filmmakers have ever overcome.

J. HOBERMAN

J. Hoberman writes about film for the *Village Voice*.

THE MORALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Back in the World
by Tobias Wolff

(Houghton Mifflin, 221 pp., $15.95)

People in Tobias Wolff's stories often ask each other questions like "What's the worst thing you've ever done?" They say these things while driving cars, while on watch at United States military installations, and during parties. They say, "You are about to hear my absolute bottom-line confession. The worst story ever told." Less often, it's "Why don't you tell us something good you did? The thing you're most proud of." From the publication of Wolff's first collection of short stories, *In the Garden of the North American Martyrs* in 1981, Wolff has shown interest in the very worst things people do to each other. He also notes more charitable deeds. He has a supple ability to find moral dimensions in ordinary American life. Fortunately, he is also a master of humor.

At least three stories in the first collection seem among the most memorable stories of the last 20 years. Perhaps the best story is "An Episode in the Life of Professor Brooke." The story follows a grown-up goody-goody who, when asked to recount his worst deed, panics and thinks back to small crimes committed when

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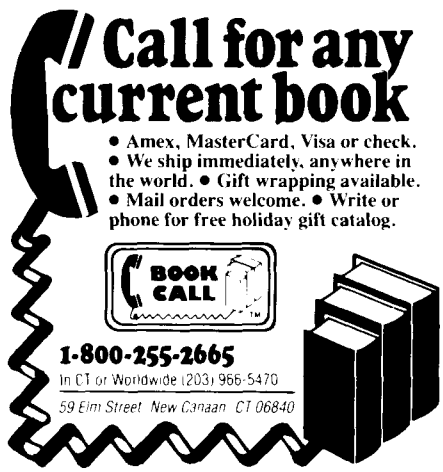

"A REAGAN REGULATORY OFFICIAL has denied that the [seat-belt] issue is one of pure paternalism because, he says, taxpayers pick up the medical bills of crash victims. This is sophistry. Bad enough, by any measure, to have the government nationalize the health system; but far worse for it to nationalize our very bodies and treat us as trespassers on government property when we put wear and tear on them."

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he was 13. Through the humor of bumbling, priggish Professor Brooke, Wolff leads the reader into more serious, charged territory. The inner lives of prigs, righteous citizens, quiet well-behaved neighbors, and tenure-bound English professors provide a springboard for Wolff. The upright ones watch from their windows—unwillingly becoming entangled with their more passionate and dangerous neighbors.

Wolff's second book, *The Barracks Thief*, appeared quietly in 1984 and received belated attention this year, winning the PEN/Faulkner award. In the 101-page novella about three young paratroopers waiting to be shipped to Vietnam, Wolff once again deftly stages a small-scale moral drama. A mysterious series of thefts occur within their company, involving each of the three boys: thief, victim, and bystander. Our narrator, neither the thief nor the victim, at first feels guilt, as if he may have somehow committed the crime without knowing it. When the thief is caught, the protagonist swells with the idea of revenge, though years later he confesses that he is uneasy with his ostensibly firm moral convictions. "I didn't set out to be what I am," he says at the book's close. "I'm a conscientious man, maybe even what you'd call a good man—I hope so. But I'm also a careful man, addicted to comfort, with an eye for the safe course." Again, the story is told by the good man, neither the victim nor the perpetrator—ironically, the only one of the three who ultimately goes to Vietnam.

WOLFF'S new book, *Back in the World* (a phrase soldiers in Vietnam used for their civilian future), contains ten stories in a more somber mode. A plainer, more subdued quality of language is immediately apparent. Consider the new stories' opening lines: "Jean was alone in the theater." "There was a park at the bottom of the hill." "There were two brothers, Pete and Donald." Compare these to first lines from *In the Garden of the North American Martyrs*: "My mother read everything except books." "Professor Brooke had no real quarrel with anyone in his department, but there was a Yeats scholar named Kiley whom he could not bring himself to like." "I woke up afraid." Where each opening from the earlier collection introduces a quirky, fallible, human voice, the beginnings in *Back in the World* feel omniscient, universal, with biblical resonance. In these new stories, Wolff works with the same thematic concerns, the same passion for moral questions, but his fictional canvas is sparer and simpler. He has, for the most part, abandoned the domestic, the familiar righteous citizen, and all his incumbent irony. He has chosen more dramatic, emblematic characters.

In the first collection, we were deposited inside normal American bedrooms and kitchens, doctor's offices, familiar academic conventions. We watched the violence and adultery of next-door neighbors. There are fewer witnesses, fewer citizen's arrests in this book. We've become the criminals ourselves. Central characters include a teenage shoplifter, a failed and corrupted priest vacationing in Las Vegas, a 21-year-old Silicon Valley Porsche-owning computer wizard, a wealthy real estate broker and the loser brother he fetches home from yet another religious commune. Although the new stories are less funny and familiar than Wolff's earlier work, they achieve a new kind of power. They are stripped-down moral fables.

In "Say Yes" a wife asks her husband, "Let's say I am black and unattached and we meet and fall in love . . . Will you marry me?" He answers, "If you were black you wouldn't be you." Later, the wife locks herself in the bathroom. She tells her husband to turn off the light. She wants the room dark before she will come into bed with him.

> He sat up but he couldn't see a thing. . . . His heart pounded the way it had on their first night together, the way it did when he woke at a noise in the darkness and waited to hear it again—the noise of someone moving through the house, a stranger.

In "Soldier's Joy" a young private asks an older enlisted man, "What was your best time?" "Vietnam," he answers.

Some readers may prefer Wolff's earlier terrain, richer in physical detail, and singularly funny. One might prefer the earlier works' gradual elevation of domestic comedy toward a heightened moral plateau, a slow build in the manner of Preston Sturges's great film *Sullivan's Travels*. With an artist as serious and honest as Tobias Wolff, the stories beg comparison only with each other.

MONA SIMPSON

Mona Simpson's first novel will be published next year by Knopf.

The cult of the English country house.

HOUSE PROUD

BY EUGENE VICTOR THAW

THE current adoration of English country house style is an exemplary sociological and cultural phenomenon of our time, linked to conservative politics, to the inevitable snob appeal of titles and royalty to republicans with a small "r," and also to the decline of Modernism. There is also the new, electronically engendered American Anglophilia: a whole generation of Americans has watched "Upstairs/Downstairs" and "Brideshead Revisited" on television. And there is the new cultural prestige of interior design and decoration: books like Marc Girouard's *Life in the English Country House* and John Comforth's *English Interiors*, as well as the magazines *House and Garden* and *Architectural Digest*, are found on more and more coffee tables of the affluent and the aspiring. The exhibition now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington is the latest manifestation of these trends. The question it raises is whether such a show is an art exhibition at all, or merely more data about the spirit of the time.

Although the exhibition is being promoted as epitomizing the English country house in toto—as presenting that country's major contribution to world art and to civilization itself—its actual title is "The Treasures from the Houses of Britain." No museum installation, however, not even the clever and resourceful one at the National Gallery,

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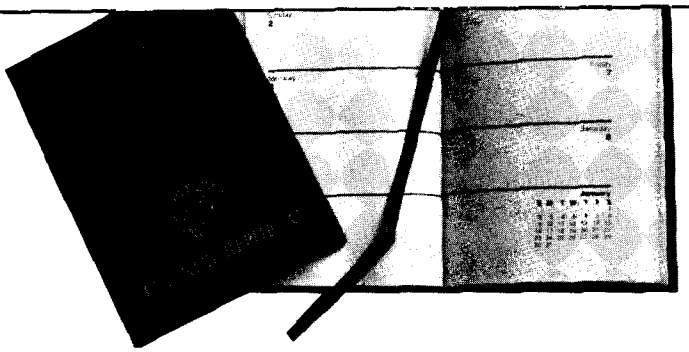
could begin to convey the atmosphere of those rural palaces with lakes and daffodils, massive facades, clustered chimneys, acres of roofs. This show is merely the largest, the most unfocused and miscellaneous example of the recent general trend in museums to show "treasures." New York now has, in effect, the "Lichtenstein Treasures." A few years ago, it was the Vatican's, and before that the Chatsworth and the Dresden "Treasures." Even my favorite museum, New York's Morgan Library, had its "treasures" of the Royal House of Orange.

IN FACT, the National Gallery exhibition is a continuation of the public awareness campaign begun with an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London ten years ago, "The Destruction of the English Country House," though the catalog strives for a much grander, more commanding view. (The lenders are more realistic; the prospect of an increase in tourism to benefit their houses helped elicit their cooperation.) As Marc Girouard explains in his essay, these houses did indeed constitute centers of power, and their art collections were evidence of a kind of public patronage similar to the princes and landgraves of the German states. Much is made of the fact that, from early times, these houses and their collections were open to at least a certain qualified public. Chatsworth, for example, received 80,000 visitors a summer by 1849. (Indeed, the competition for masterworks and their public display among the great landed aristocrats was not unlike today's competition among rival affluent museums in American cities.) Still, as Francis Haskell makes quite clear in his admirably honest essay "The British as Collectors," much of the best of the contents of many great houses is gone—a decline that began at least 100 years ago. One has only to walk into the older West Building of the National Gallery to see, in many cases, better examples of paintings by the more famous artists included in the exhibition.

The British gentry's great commitment to land and possessions, and its desire for both rural privacy and conspicuous display, were the driving forces behind a 400-year building spree that, at its apogee, saw no fewer than 5,000 country seats, ranging from the manors of local squires to great ducal palaces in a wide array of architectural



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styles: Jacobean, Baroque, Palladian, Gothic, and so on. Already in the 18th century, some of the art treasures within these houses were dispersed. Much of what was sold in Victorian times stayed in wealthy England, passing to other hands or to the National Gallery in London.

After the First World War, however, with its devastating shocks to the old social systems, the ability of the aristocratic families to maintain those enormous establishments rapidly declined. Today even the houses that are still lived in are usually opened to the public on a regular basis, and are beneficiaries of numerous schemes for governmental and private charitable support. The same curiosity about "lifestyles of the rich and famous" that has made the National Gallery's exhibition such a media event serves the beneficial purpose of bringing droves of visitors to see the gardens and public rooms of these houses, to hear a volunteer guide, pointing to an indifferent Edwardian portrait, say that it is "his lordship's grandmother—she did the needlepoint on the chair seats in the next room."

It is that kind of information—titillating in its closeness to aristocratic gossip, often made up on the spot or otherwise inaccurate, and anyway quickly forgotten—which seems to have inspired the enormous catalog for the exhibition. The entries for the individual objects and paintings are very much in the tradition of such guided tours, however much more scholarly they may be. For instance, there is one painting, Chardin's "Boy Building a House of Cards" (Le Faiseur de Chateaux de Cartes), which, far from paling in comparison to a similar piece in the National Gallery's own collection, is in fact the original of which a studio copy (or perhaps a poorer autograph version) hangs in the West Building. After telling us some interesting bits about this great painting that only came to light recently, the writer (Francis Russell) quickly leaves the work of art and plunges into questions of family relationships and arrangements of rooms. I quote a short section, and picture in my mind a tour with a rather superior but typically irrelevant docent:

> Fauquier (one of the picture's owners) was a close friend of the Harcourt family. He was consulted about the choice of the site for the new house at Nuneham in 1756 and his daughter married the 1st Earl's step-nephew, the 2nd Lord Vernon whose sister married the 2nd Earl in 1765 in 1786 [sic]. A number of works from Fauquier's collection, including a Lauri that he presented to Lord Harcourt, are recorded in the 1797 and 1806 Nuneham guides and it would seem that after his posthumous sale of 1789 the picture was given or sold to the 2nd Earl Harcourt (1736-1809), perhaps by Fauquier's widow, who was left a legacy in Harcourt's will of 1805.
>
> Lord Harcourt had inherited Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire, the Palladian house built in 1756-1784 by Stiff Leadbetter for his father Simon, the 1st Earl, when the latter died trying to rescue a favourite dog from a well in 1777.

Now will everyone please step into the next room!

The passage is characteristic of the approach of the entire catalog. Choked with Dowager Duchesses, 7th and 8th Earls, Marchionesses, and plain milords, it also includes an elaborate glossary of titles and correct forms of address. (A duke is "His Grace," a marquess "The Most Honourable," and other peers, by courtesy, "The Right Honourable," and much more.) No wonder Washington hostesses are more agog over this show, according to the newspapers, than anything else in living memory. Have we forgotten Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado*? The British themselves know how to laugh at some of this hereditary grandeur.

THE obligatory Grand Tour of the Continent—undertaken by affluent young bloods sent mainly to Italy (Rome, Florence, Naples, and Venice) to finish off their education—is the cornerstone of the exhibition: what was sent back home by sometimes as many as 30,000 Englishmen abroad was nothing less than the largest transfer of art property in the history of mankind. Even the Napoleonic rape of Italy could not rival it in scale. Unfortunately, the exhibition gives a rather indifferent account of the material, at least in the area of paintings. Several fine Canalettos, but not a single Guardi; two routine Roman Panninis; several portraits of En-

Running Snow

No hands. They hang
white and dead, so cold
that absence outweighs sight.
You go on testing
the *open* and *close*, a motion
that reminds you of claws
clumsy in the blue element that sifts
the white silt of the ocean floor;
your eye on the white muscle the fist makes,
the knuckles' blue ridge,
as if all evidence of the body
beat in the hands.
Pale blue in this light, this torch
in your side, and your being
goes automatic, separating
foot from hill, higher and faster.
What you hear is the muffled slap
of running snow, what you swallow
is bile and salt, your own gut self
rising like a ballast against
the cold body of the night outside.

Dead center: this heart,
this earth-planet
colored with thump; louder now
against the force field of your weight.
No brilliance here,
this systemic influence, this routine beat
eclipsing the tired feet in the snow.
Harmony is dark and darker still
at the point of understanding—
like captivity's song,
what frost is to the cricket,
the post-coital stillness of the jay.
And you're home with this anarchy of hands,
this voice you can no longer shut up, something
merciful
saying *leave it alone*: the seduction
of the idiot grief, the crucial
cloth you've pulled away.
Now rain-runner, snow-eater,
you go face up in the halting snow, the stars
beginning to seed the long side of the sky.

And all the deaths rise and mingle.

CLEOPATRA MATHIS

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glishmen abroad by Zoffany, Batoni, Nazzari, and even lesser artists; one mediocre Bernini bust, and a great Bellotto view of Verona represent the "souvenir of Italy" in the heyday of British collecting. Surely there is better and more.

The same is true of the Dutch section. There are some very fine things and more indifferent ones—neither a good mini-exhibition of Dutch art nor an epitome of what was actually owned in England. Moreover, only two old master drawings are shown, not a single Italian or Flemish Primitive, and except for the Chardin, hardly a decent 18th-century French picture. To be fair, the exhibition does contain a number of absolute masterpieces—the Buccleuch Rembrandt, the Westminster Claudes, the Firle Place Koninck, and the great Stubbs of Mares and Foals—but like the stately homes themselves, there are simply too many undistinguished family portraits and objects of purely associative significance.

When one arrives at the last rooms, the breakdown of patronage and taste in the recent generations of the aristocracy is painfully evident. Unlike the Venetian nobles, who in their splendid sunset in the late 18th century did up their palaces and villas with Tiepolos, Longhis, and Piazzettas, the Edwardians in that last flowering of the landed ruling class had themselves painted with dishonest, flattering charm by Sargent, de Lazlo, Annigoni, and Munnings, and put Fabergé knickknacks on their shelves.

In fact the ups and downs of this exhibition—the tremendous variations of quality and the mixture of styles and objects of many different kinds—are typical of the country houses themselves. Thus, almost despite itself, the show conveys a fairly accurate sense of their contents. Yet no museum installation could begin to capture the elegant shabbiness of such ensembles, in which great works of art and plain family junk live side by side casually and unpretentiously. And in any case, the endearing shabbiness of the original is the last thing the curators of this show had on their minds. To judge by the extravagant advance claims for the exhibition, and the bowing and scraping that has greeted its arrival, it comes over here bearing a lesson about the superiority of aristocratic life in the Mother Country. Lest we get too carried away in our starstruck envy and forget who we are, then, consider this passage from *The Architecture of Country Houses* by Andrew Jackson Downing, the American landscapist and architect, published in 1850.

> It is only in an old country, where there is a large surplusage of domestic service, that domestic establishments of large size can be conducted with pleasure and ease to the proprietor. Here, it is quite the contrary. A country house, where the conveniences are such that the establishments may be moderate, the living-rooms compact and well arranged, the facility of performing all household labors increased as much as possible, is the perfect villa for America.
>
> But the main argument against the creation of large establishments is, that the whole theory is a mistake; that it is impossible, except for a day; that our laws render the attempt folly; and our institutions finally grind it to powder.
>
> There is something beautiful and touching in the associations that grow up in a home held sacred in the same family for generations. A wealth of affection is kept alive in those old manor-houses and country halls of England, where, age after age, the descendants of one family have lived, and loved, and suffered, and died—perhaps nobly and bravely too—sheltered by the same trees and guarded by the same walls. It is quite natural that we, largely descended from this Anglo-Saxon stock, when we have fortunes to spend, should fondly delude ourselves with the idea of realizing this old and pleasing idyl of beautiful country life. But it is only an idyl, or only a delusion to us. It belongs to the past, so far as we are concerned. It is no more to be reanimated in the republic of the new world than the simple faith in the Virgin, which built the mighty cathedrals of the middle ages. It could only be reanimated at the sacrifice of the happiness of millions of free citizens. □

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

tract them when they're supported?

As an American, I'm glad that IPPNW leaders might have some clout with the men who have targeted my country for incineration. If I were a Russian, I'd want like-minded colleagues influencing policy in Washington. In any case, IPPNW is composed of national groups who determine their own composition and structure.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Now You Know

AT LEAST A DECADE ago, in a small bistro on the Rue Dragon, I lunched with a leftish French intellectual who had embarked on a film project about the Holocaust. I have now seen the product of his labors, *Shoah* (the Hebrew word for holocaust), and am embarrassed to admit that I had thought he was too obsessed and also too literary to produce a visual document that might reveal anything about the Jewish catastrophe that had remained obscure despite all that has been written (and filmed) about it. It turns out he was not too literary, or too theatrical. The Israelis (doubtless thinking of Elie Wiesel) say, "There's no business like *shoah* business." But here is a piece of historical cinema that does not pander or dissimulate. It is raw record. And it contains grotesque truths you'd prefer (or at least I'd prefer) not to confront. Not the callousness of most Poles during the killings (with some exceptions and many martyrs of their own); there's nothing new in that. I do not expect heroism in opposition from any people. Still, you'd think that the peasants and villagers here depicted would be capable of revulsion today at what happened back then to their neighbors. But they aren't really repelled, most of them, although one or two are morbidly, touchingly saddened. In any case, they understand why the Jews were killed. Because they stank. Because they were ugly. Because the women thought only of beauty and clothes. Because the little Jewesses were beautiful and attractive to young Polish men. Because the Jews were rich. Because they were the richest. Because they had all the capital. All the industry. In fact they had all of Poland, these tailors and tanners. Because they were dishonest. Because they exploited. And they had gold in the false bottoms of their cooking pots. And because the blood of Jesus was upon them. "That's all," said one."Now you know."

THIS LAST REMARK was uttered, to the satisfaction of a gathered crowd, outside the church in Chelmno on the day celebrating the birth of the Virgin Mary. Apparently, and despite a Polish pope, the post-Vatican II teachings of the Church on the Jews have not yet reached Chelmno, where 400,000 Jews were gassed only a bit more than 40 years ago. And the word hasn't reached Grabow either. But there, at least, an old man says the killing was "unpleasant," although he might have been glad if the Jews had "gone to Israel of their own free will," which many would have done if they had been allowed.

THERE ARE MANY states that do not recognize Israel. Aside from all the Arab governments except Egypt, the list includes Cambodia, Uganda, and every Eastern bloc country save Rumania—a wonderful bunch, some 120 in all. And let's not forget the Vatican, which manages to maintain perfectly proper diplomatic relations with over 130 countries, necessarily including just about all the thug countries in the world, and of course with those that have been at war with Israel for a generation. Edgar Bronfman, chairman of the board of Seagram's and the widely respected president of the World Jewish Congress, has had the gumption to raise this moral and political scandal publicly. It's about time someone did. Although Pope John Paul II has from time to time declaimed high-minded sentiments about respect for the "children of Abraham," his curates explain that Israel remains under the Vatican's diplomatic interdict because the Jewish state's borders are unclear and the status of Jerusalem is still unresolved. This is scarlet flimflam. Recognition of and regular relations with another country never connote approval or sanction for its particular political arrangements, permanent or temporary. Or does the papacy want us to understand its relations with, let us say, Iran as countenancing the various depredations of Khomeini's regime? Now, as T. S. Eliot told us, "The Church can sleep and feed at once." It needs, we are told in whispers, the indulgence of Arab leaders for the safety of the Catholic faithful in the world of Islam. Why else would the Vicar of Christ have welcomed Yasir Arafat to the Holy See? Maybe that also explains why the Vatican indulges terrorist clergy in wearing the cross of the Prince of Peace. A similar rationale, say apologists for Pius XII, is what motivated his quiescence to Hitler. It's unworthy.

IT MAY BE theologically uncomfortable for the pope to accept that, in the mysterium tremendum of the universe, the Jewish people have been restored to their ancient land and have themselves restored a Jewish commonwealth. But it is the truth. Now that the Holy Father has finally encouraged his flock to understand the special calvary of the Holocaust in which so many Jews perished, often in the very ambit of the Church itself, he might also acknowledge that reality of the existence of Israel, through which new life now breathes in Jewry and in Judaism. After all, in the Poland of his birth, the Poland that sees itself as the Christ of Nations and the most faithful daughter of the Church, the Jewish world was murdered and not greatly mourned.

PERHAPS THE LAW will not first go forth from Jerusalem, but from London and Belfast and Dublin. And it will then be called a condominium arrangement. The accord envisions a new political arrangement for Ulster: not mixed rule, exactly, but diminished British sovereignty through reciprocal treaty guarantees for the civil rights and group identities of both religious factions. The treaty evokes the minority clauses of the post-World War I peace treaties, which, as historian H. Stuart Hughes has written, "were violated with depressing regularity." Not a happy precedent. And of course it already has been attacked by the Catholic and Protestant ultras. Still, that any such proposal receives the support of not one, but three political mainstreams is heartening. And it may even work, since just about everybody in both Irelands has finally recognized that the IRA wants anything but a plausible solution. The analogy is not precise, but some condominium formula for the West Bank, tied to the notion of autonomy as conceived at Camp David, might appeal to people who must know by now that the irredentist fantasies of the PLO are just that. Shimon Peres has stared down his own ultras. Who will help the Arabs stare down theirs? Alas, not the pope, at least not yet.

M.P.

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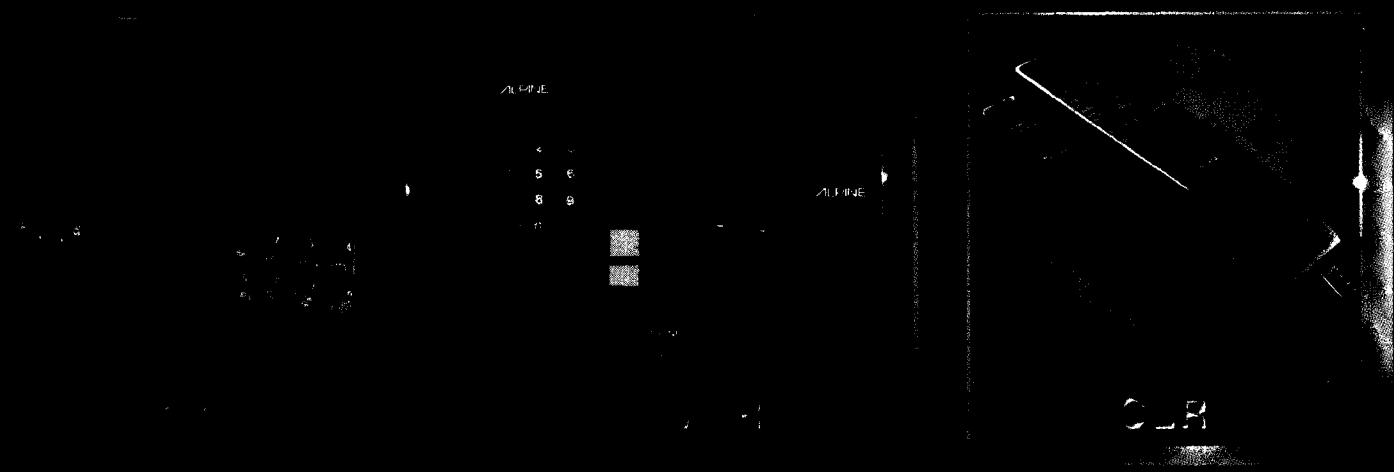

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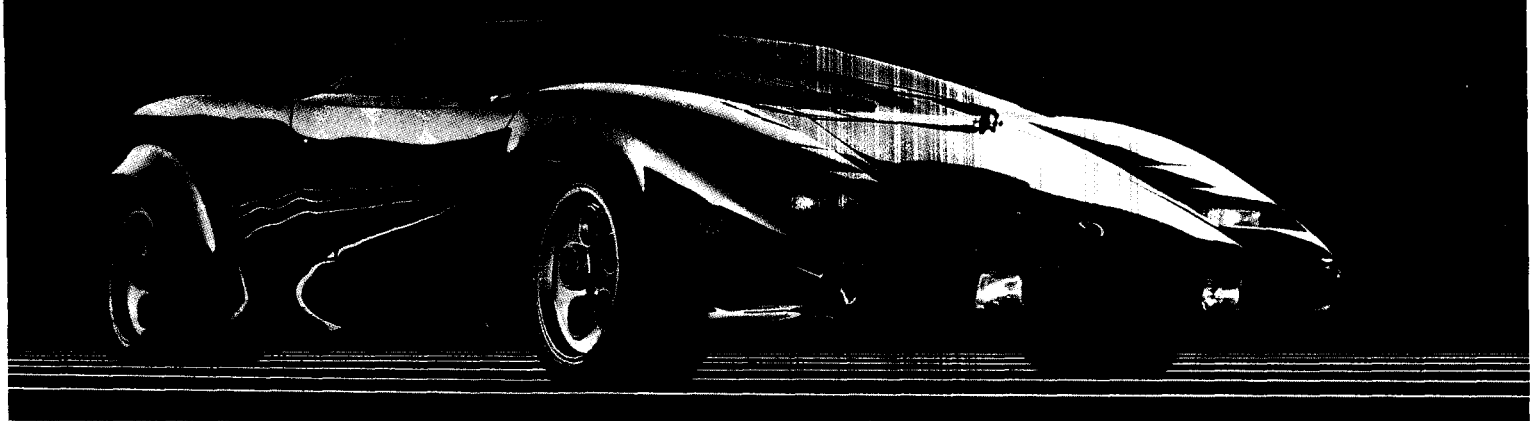

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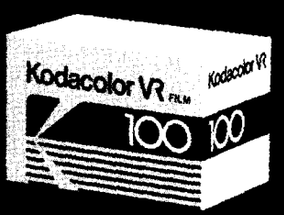

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